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ink Deep

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40 GREAT BACKPIECES

LIMITED EDITION COVER • LIMITED EDITION COVER •
207
LIMITED EDITION COVER • LIMITED EDITION COVER

WIN NY INK AND
LA INK BOX SETS

**WHAT'S UP
DAWGS?**

THIS ISSUE WE TOOK
THE OPPORTUNITY
TO HANG OUT AT
THE INCREDIBLE
**AMSTERDAM
TATTOO MUSEUM**

SOLID

AS EVER, THERE'S A WHOLE
AVALANCHE MORE INSIDE...

AND GOT WAYLAID BY SOME
INKED-UP ROLLER GIRLS.
WE BRIEFLY CAME HOME FOR LUNCH
WITH THE GUYS AT **NO REGRETS
STUDIO** BEFORE RE-BOARDING
TO TAKE IN THE **FLORENCE
CONVENTION.**

NO ISSUE IS COMPLETE
WITHOUT THE FINEST ART -
**MATTHEW HOCKADAY
KEVIN MARR,
OLY ANGER AND
OSA WAHN**
FLAUNT THEIRS.

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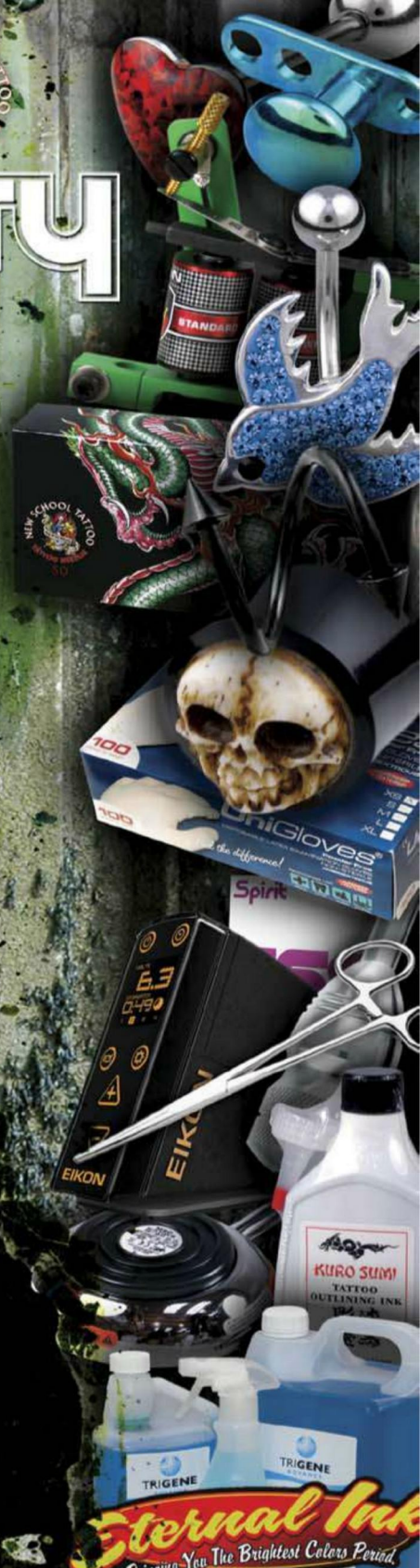
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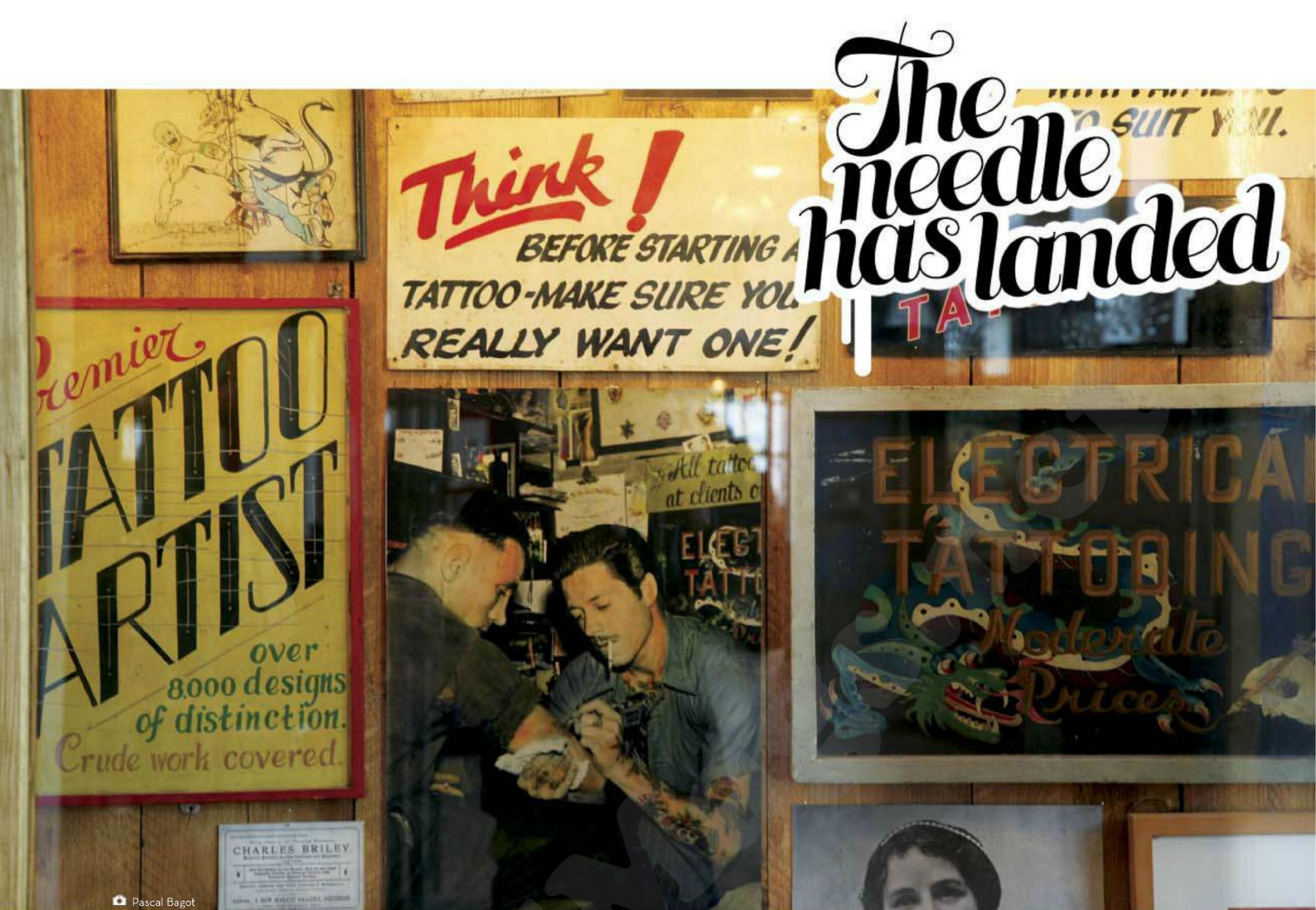
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CH, CH, CH, CH, CHANGES...

Back when I was a hip, cool and groovy teenager in the mid-'80s (this would of course only be in my head – the rest of the world, particularly the female race, used a much simpler descriptive phrase), it was pretty hard to get a Saturday job. Nobody really wants to work when they're a teenager, but as we all discover very fast, alcohol does not grow on trees.

My friend got a job working the freezer department in a supermarket. Figuring that if somebody who was equally as much of a dick as I was could get a job there, it would be a walk in the park to join him. But I couldn't have been more wrong, as I was told that my hair was too long and would give the wrong impression to customers. Maybe the dude was

just jealous that I still had some hair. Anyway, I did eventually get a job – I guess it all depends what you're prepared to do for money. For those interested, it was stacking car exhausts off a truck, which sounds way more glamorous than it actually was.

Fast forward a number of

FIGURING THAT IF SOMEBODY WHO WAS EQUALLY AS MUCH OF A DICK AS I WAS COULD GET A JOB THERE, IT WOULD BE A WALK IN THE PARK TO JOIN HIM

years and I see that very same supermarket – Tesco – doesn't worry so much about it anymore. My local store has security guys with many visible tattoos, they even have a young guy working the tills who is quite noticeably battling with which colours to steal from his Ma's make-up bag. As an old glam-banger myself, I say this as an observation, not

as a detrimental comment – this is good all round. So far as I can tell, being a – how can I put this – 'visible minority' – is a non-issue when it comes to employment in some important and key places. Not only is it acceptable, it appears to be a non-issue which is even better.

Yet I know from some of the mail we get, that this isn't the case everywhere. I guess some places still want to appear to be 'respectable', though who they think their audience is in 2012, is anyone's guess. Sometimes though, I think it's used as a convenient excuse. Back in 1985, my hair wasn't anywhere close to long. My face simply

didn't fit. Much as I would like to think we've moved on, the same happens today everywhere.

Rather than attack those who are still playing a 1980s game, lets go positive and hear about those that have moved on... Bring it!

Sen



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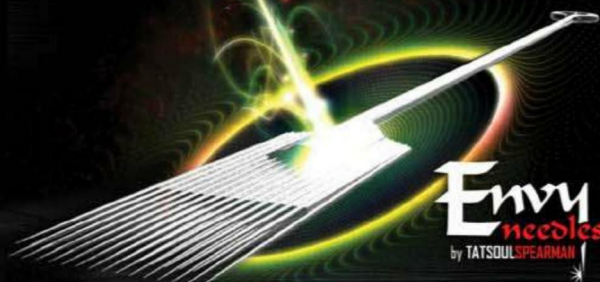
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THE USUAL SUSPECTS

06 SLEEVE NOTES
We only give so much stuff away, because we love you, y'know...

08 WALK THIS WAY
Scalpel. Forceps. Shredder. Check out these treats.

10 SMALLMAN SYNDROME
In which Jim shakes his tail feathers once more.

08 AN EYE IS UPON YOU
Paula gets all fresh and optimistic in the New Year.

STUDIO PROFILE

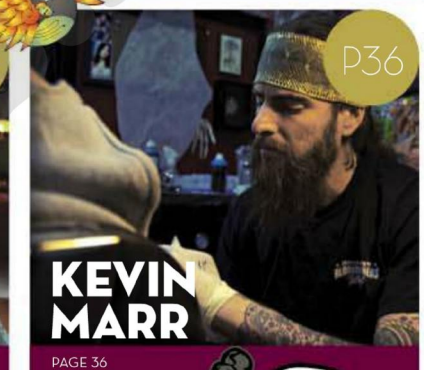
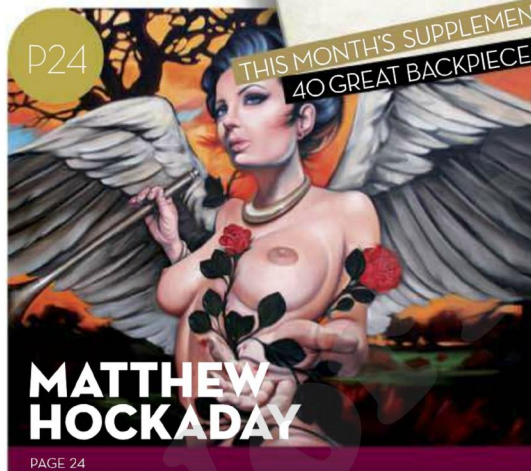
06 NO REGRETS
It's big, it's beautiful and well, we'll let them do the talking for themselves...

SPECIAL FEATURES

14 ONCE WERE WARRIORS
He may have left the Big Country, but that doesn't mean it's over. Craig-Lee stops off in New Zealand on his way home.

ARTIST PROFILES

INSETS This issue, we bring you four of the very best in the world, all with different talents, all with different styles – let's crack this kinder-egg wide open.



18 A SPY IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE
The unveiling of the Amsterdam Tattoo Museum unearthed some frankly awesome treasures.

30 HELL ON WHEELS
A brush with a photographer and some heavily inked-up roller girls.

74 PAPERBACK WRITERS
The first in an ongoing series. We look at tattoos in all kinds of media – starting with some very high profile books.

06 FLORENCE & THE MACHINE
You can't buy a title like that and get away with it anywhere else! The Florence Show revealed!



02 TATTOO FREEZE PREVIEW
Just a few snaps from some of the great artists at Tattoo Freeze this month.

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Jazz Publishing, The Old School, Higher Kinnerton, Chester, CH4 9AJ, UK. Tel: 01244 663400 Fax: 01244 660611 www.jazzpublishing.co.uk info@jazzpublishing.co.uk

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ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES Sarah Shawcross advertising@skindeep.co.uk 01244 663400 ext. 301	ADMINISTRATION Jan Schofield jan@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400 ext. 219	ADVERTISING & EVENTS MANAGER Shelley Bond shelley@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400 ext. 303	WEB MANAGER David Arthur david.arthur@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400 ext. 208	CIRCULATION & PROMOTIONS Katy Cuffin katy@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400 Ext. 237	MANAGING DIRECTOR Stuart Mears stuart@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400	Having trouble finding Skin Deep magazine in your newsagent? Please contact our distribution company for your nearest outlet 0207 429 4073.

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Sleeve Notes

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ALL SUBMISSIONS TO SLEEVE NOTES GRATEFULLY RECEIVED. BE IT NEWS, AN EVENT, NEW MERCH, A STUDIO MOVE... WE'LL DO OUR VERY BEST TO LET EVERYBODY ELSE KNOW ABOUT IT TOO. EMAIL: EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK OR IF YOU WANT TO BE ARCHAIC ABOUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR: SKIN DEEP, THE OLD SCHOOL, HIGHER KINNERTON, CHESTER CH4 9AJ. BRING IT.



MEGA IRON FIST GIVEAWAY!

Those splendid folk over at Iron Fist have loaded us with not one, but two armfuls of swag to foist onto our readers (that's you). We've got here an absolute tonne of T-shirts to give away. If you're optimistic like we are, spring is not so damned far away, so let's get it on and get ready for it. Usual rules apply because essentially we're as lazy as you are – send an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line of IRONFIST and we'll do the rest.

Iron Fist was devised by two friends in San Diego, the idea was to create a clothing and footwear brand for men and women that they could not find anywhere else, taking inspiration from an array of talented tattoo and underground street artists. Iron Fist refuse to be pigeonholed into a single genre, allowing them to grow with its consistent diversity and an innovate approach to each season. Need any more reasons? Available from www.ironfist.co.uk.



THE BIG FREEZE

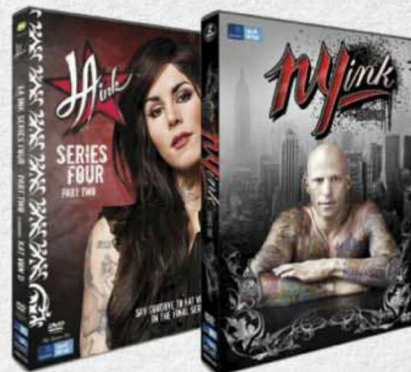
By the time you've got this issue in your sticky paws, Tattoo Freeze will be just a stones-throw away. If you're an early bird with the issue, there's still time to get yourselves some advance tickets, but tickets will be available on the day if that suits you better. With a bit of luck the bad weather will busy itself elsewhere and leave us alone too. See you there...

LATE VACANCY

One of the most serious, relaxed custom shops in Copenhagen are looking for a skilled new co-worker. Looking for a new place to spread you wings and take a deep fresh breath? We mostly do traditional and semi-traditional and is therefore looking for a professional tattooer who can contribute with a different style. Are you good at black and grey, japanese or have an extraordinary unique style? If so I would love to hear from you. Shop experience is a appreciated. You must be service minded and not afraid to speak your mind. We are a dynamic team consisting of Zooki, our apprentice, Anders, and myself. Three-month trial period is required, then we can take it from there. Cool customers and cool co-workers. Contact: Brightside Tattoo: aminacharai@gmail.com.



SHORT SLEEVES



DVD BLOWOUT!

This month, we've got five sets of LA Ink Season Four (part two) and five sets of Series One of NY Ink to give away – to make it a bit special for those that win, we've decided to bundle them together, so five winners will get both sets. If you've been adventuring in the Congo or something, this will be a good opportunity to say goodbye to Kat in this, the final series of LA Ink and at the same time, you can welcome Ami James as he leaves Miami to take on New York City in his new show.

To be in with a shot at getting your paws on these, drop an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line INK DVD and we may pull you out of the hat before the end of January.

SHORT SLEEVES

GUEST SPOT

The intrepid explorer, Craig Lee, will be guesting at Needlework Tattoo (Lightwater, Surrey – www.needleworktattoo.com) from January 6 to February 21, 2012. He can be contacted for bookings via email: iknowcraig@hotmail.com or at www.craigylee.com.



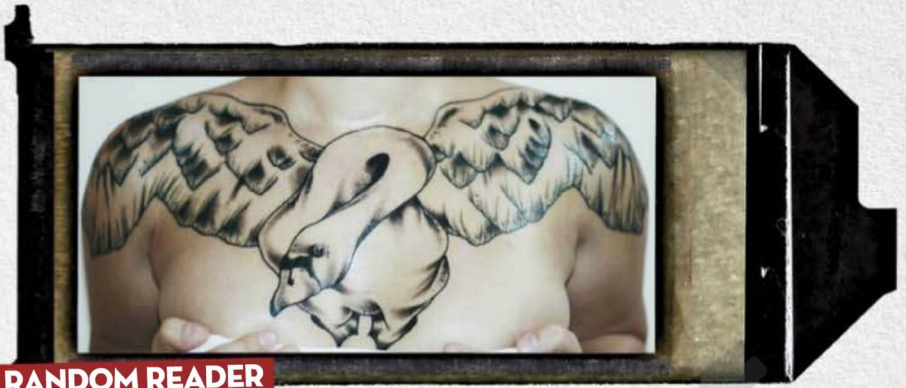
ACES HIGH

Smokin' ace Tattoo Studio, Croxley Green, Watford, is now open and run by KNEILLX, an award-winning tattoo artist with 20 years experience.

Kneillx's strong outlines, black shading and bold colours have won him an army of tattoo fans across the region; and his traditional style tattooing has been featured in many of the UK's top tattoo magazines. Kneillx would like to thank his many clients, old and new, for their continuing support. Get your ass down there: Smokin Ace Tattoo, 195 Watford Road, Croxley Green, Herts, WD3 3EH. T: 01923 444152 E: info@smokinacetattoo.co.uk. Monday-Saturday: 11:30am-6pm.

RHODE ISLAND FUN

The expo/convention will take place April 27 to 29, 2012, at the RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER in PROVIDENCE, RI. People can get more info at www.facebook.com/rhodeislandtattooexpo.



RANDOM READER

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MONTH

This rather large swan made it to the special corner this month due to it being Layla Smethurst's first one. That's a pretty brave

move for your first one – and we all know how much those collarbones rattle under the needle. Nice work! Trey Burnside of Brazen Ink, Warwick is the artist (www.brazen-ink.co.uk) and the tattoo was done in six hours at the UK's 1st female tattoo convention in Leamington Spa on October 9, 2011.



ZARAGOZA CON

The Fourth 'International Zaragoza Tattoo Convention' (Spain) together with the ninth 'Motor Show Festival' will return for three days in which the ink will not stop running from 3 to 5 February, 2012.

Zaragoza is the fifth Spanish city in number of inhabitants and the fourth one in economic activity, enjoys a privileged geographical situation being to only 300 kms of Valencia, Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao and Toulouse (France), possessing connections of AVE and International Airport. Fourth Zaragoza Tattoo Convention (Spain), 3-5 February 2012, Feria de Zaragoza. www.zaragozatattooconvention.com www.spaintattooconventions.com



ALT WEDDING FAYRE

London's first Alternative Wedding Fair will take place January 22, 2012, at Islington Metal Works. This comes after the success of England's first Alternative Wedding Fair in St. Ives, Cambridgeshire on October 23, 2011. The Alternative Wedding Fair is for brides and grooms who do not identify with existing wedding fairs because they do not offer options that reflect the couple's personal style and sense of fun. Its mission is to make weddings memorable events that both couples and guests enjoy, rather than regard as compulsory.

If you'd like more information on The Alternative Wedding Fair, or to schedule an interview with Heidi Thompson, please contact her on 07895 684208 or email her at heidi@thealternativeweddingfair.com.



Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

January 14-15

SCOTTISH BODY ART SHOW

The Station Hotel, Perth, Scotland
www.scottishbodyart.co.uk

January 15

TATTOO FREEZE

Telford International Centre
 Shropshire, England
www.tattoofreeze.com

January 28-29

BRIGHTON TATTOO CONVENTION

The Racecourse, Brighton, East Sussex, England
www.brightontattoo.com

February 3-5

4TH ZARAGOZA TATTOO CONVENTION

Feria de zaragoza, Spain
www.zaragozatatooconvention.com
www.spaintattooconventions.com

February 10-12

BEST IN THE MID WEST TATTOO CONVENTION

Mid America Center, Hilton Horseshoe Casino
 Hotel, Council Bluffs, Iowa, USA
www.shaneoneillproductions.com
empiretattoo08@yahoo.com

February 19

NORTHWICH CHARITY TATTOO & ART EXPO

Winnington Park Recreation Club
 Northwich, Cheshire, England
www.northwichtattooexpo.co.uk

February 25-26

INTERNATIONAL TATTOO & ART

Expo Claudelands Event Centre
 Hamilton, New Zealand
www.tattooart.co.nz

March 10-11

ROTTERDAM TATTOO CONVENTION

Rotterdam, Netherlands
www.unitedconventions.com

March 16-18

LADY LUCK TATTOO EXPO

Circus Circus Hotel & Casino, Reno
 Nevada, USA
www.ladylucktattooexpo.com

March 25

10TH PETERLEE TATTOO ARTS FESTIVAL

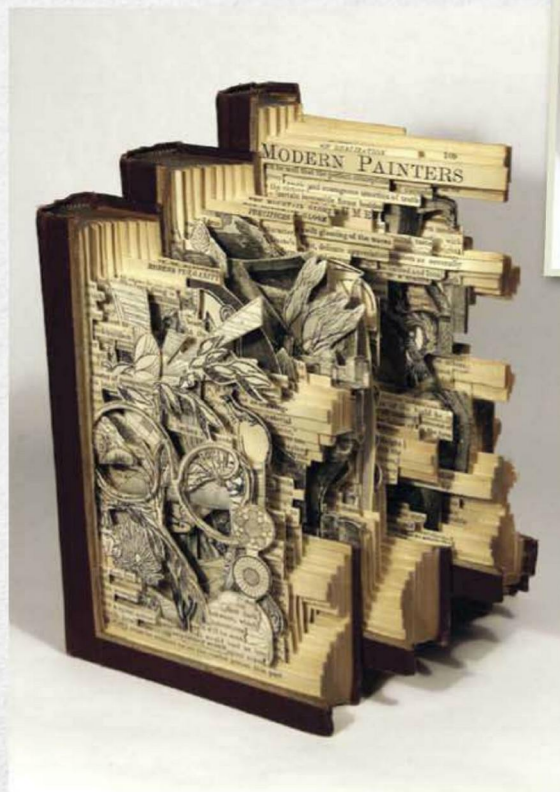
Peterlee Leisure Centre, Durham, England
 Contact Trudy @ Eddies Tattoo Studio
 0191 5871787
eddie@ehardiman.orangehome.co.uk

April 1

INK & IRON TATTOO CONVENTION

The Tower, Reservoir Road, Edgbaston
 Birmingham, England
www.inkandiron.co.uk

THE BOOK SURGEON



We know for a fact that pretty much all of our readers appreciate great art when they see it – and while this has got nothing whatsoever to do with tattoo (so far as we know) – its very subject matter elevates itself into our pages

Originally from Chicago, Brian Dettmer currently resides in Atlanta, GA. Brian Dettmer is a genius. This is my honest appraisal of the man. Known better to some perhaps as The Book Surgeon, Dettmer does some serious damage (in a good way) to 'antiquated' media that makes me wonder how you even begin chipping away at a project like this.

In recent years, Dettmer has established himself as one of the leading international contemporary artists working with the book today. In 2011 his work was featured on the cover of *Book Art* (Gestalten Publishers, Berlin) and was discussed in a historical context in *Bookwork* (Stewart, The University of Chicago Press). In 2012 he is scheduled to have solo shows in San Francisco with Toomey Tourell Fine Art and The Jewish Community Center; in Maribor, Slovenia as part of its celebration

as the European Cultural Capital of 2012; in Lucca, Italy for Cartasia, a biennale of contemporary paper art; and in Atlanta at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia. His work is also scheduled to be in several group shows including '40 under 40' at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institute.

If you get a chance to check out his work in the flesh (as I damn well plan to as soon as possible), I'm sure it will be mind blowing. It's simply fascinating to look at on the page and I'm sure it has the propensity to be quite life changing with regards to the levels of what we accept as 'great art'.

You can check out Dettmer's official site at briandettmer.com, but there's a great interview with him that's worth a read, here: mymodemmet.com/profiles/blogs/interview-with-the-book. Aside from that, I think the books do quite enough talking for him.

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Conventions

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April 8-9

FIRST INTERNATIONAL SOUTHEND TATTOO CONVENTION

The Kursaal, Southend Sea Front
Southend-on-Sea, Essex, England
12 midday till 12 midnight (both days)
Contact Eddie Roberts on 01702 616666
www.southendtattoo.com

April 13-15

NORTH WEST TATTOO SHOW

(formerly The Killybegs Tattoo Convention)
The Abbey Hotel, Donegal Town, Ireland
Info: Ruth or Liosa from Zombie Dolls Tattoo
Parlour on 00353 74 9722440
northwesttattooshow@ireland.com

April 14-15

NORTH LAKES TATTOO SHOW

The Shepherds Inn, Carlisle,
Cumbria, England
01228 545156
www.northlakestattooshow.co.uk
northlakestattooshow@aol.com

April 14-15

2ND TATTOO EXTRAVAGANZA

Portsmouth Pyramids Centre
Southsea Sea Front, Portsmouth, England
All enquiries, contact Reno on 07907 009161
www.tattooextravaganza.co.uk
tattooextravaganza@live.co.uk

April 15-17

WEST COAST TATTOO SHOW

PNE Forum, Vancouver, BC, Canada
www.westcoasttattooshow.com

APRIL 21-22

GREAT BRITISH TATTOO SHOW

London Olympia, England
www.britishtattooshow.com

May 5-6

LIVERPOOL TATTOO CONVENTION

Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, England
www.tattooconvention.co.uk

May 12-13

PLYMOUTH TATTOO CONVENTION

Guildhall, Plymouth, Devon, England
www.plymouthtattooconvention.co.uk

May 19-20

NORTHAMPTON INTERNATIONAL TATTOO

Tea Party Rodbur Suite, Northampton
Saints Rugby Ground, England
01604 949958
www.northamptoninternational-tattooconvention.com
sunsandrosestattoo@hotmail.com

May 26-27

BOURNEMOUTH TATTOO CONVENTION

Bournemouth International Convention Centre,
Exeter Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, England
www.bournemouthtattooconvention.com

SMALLMAN SYNDROME

By the time you read this column, 2012 will be firmly underway and I will definitely have some more ridiculous ink

I've got plans for my skin that always surpass New Year resolutions – in that I always stick to my tattoo plans, but if I resolved to not eat chocolate then I could guarantee that I'd be in hospital choking on a twix by January 2. If I say I'm getting something etched into me, then I always do it. I've got a lot of things planned, mind you.

Firstly, there is unfinished business. I want to have my hero/ favourite wrestler/ author, Mick Foley, on my arm in portrait form, accompanied by the little bit of prose he wrote me when I met him in 2011 when I was supporting him on tour; it's great to confirm that a subject for a tattoo is such a genuinely lovely guy as well.

He'll be joined by a portrait of another hero – Carry On film star, Kenneth Williams – and my already-finished Ron Burgundy tattoo. I'm also getting some rubber ducks on paper planes, which is a little in-joke with my eight-year-old daughter. She has also insisted that I must get some kind of Hello Kitty tattoo, although most graciously she has insisted that I can choose what everyone's favourite Japanese cat is wearing as a costume. I do know somebody who already has a Kitty Zombie, so I can't steal that awesome idea.

I also started something on Twitter as a joke prior to Christmas. Sat with my agent, I decided to come up with the longest hashtag that I could, for a laugh. It was the following: #GetJimTo5000FollowersAndHeWillHaveYouTattooedOnHim.

I sent it without any real thought, and then watched as people retweeted it over



Mr Smith and Mr Smallman
being mysterious

and over, with certain famous comedians deciding to take it on board to get me into tattoo-based trouble. I gained 700 followers in a day. As I write this, I'm halfway there and once I hit the target I've got to have three of my followers inked onto me: the

person who refers the most people, plus two other followers chosen completely at random. I'll have their little square profile picture on me, plus their name. I reckon by the time I write my next column I'll be adorned with the design. Just have to hope whoever comes out of the hat doesn't have anything embarrassing for their avatar picture... like a Nottingham Forest badge or something horrific like that.

Did make me think though, I can't be the only one with social network-based tattoos, can I? Help me out. If you know someone with their twitter handle on their neck or the blue facebook thumb on their hand with 'like' written next to it, then do let me know. And as always, if you are an artist or an aficionado and you're proud of your more left-of-centre ink then get in touch ASAP. Always love hearing from you.

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ONCE WERE WARRIORS



When most people think about tattooing in the Southern Hemisphere Australia is often over-looked by the small island of New Zealand. Tattooing is not just a job here, it has strong cultural significance that is centuries old. Inevitably, somewhere so rich in tattoo history warrants a visit, and only a three-hour plane ride from Melbourne, it seemed the logical next step



It's hard to write anything about this place and do it justice. Every corner turned whilst driving through the immense landscape could be a screenshot from *The Lord of The Rings*. It is a photographers dream; I think you would have to be very unlucky to get bad holiday pictures here, and you just can't help feeling like you're waiting for an Orc army to come charging over the mountains.

I start my tattoo journey around New Zealand at the aptly named Epic Ink, in the capital of the South Island, Christchurch. Recently hit by a serious earthquake that made world news, the aftermath is still very present.

Craigie Lee

The whole city centre, now called the red zone, is closed off due to unstable buildings, while old newspapers and coffee cups sit in the windows of condemned shops as a rather sombre memory of the tragedies of that day.

Epic Ink has been on the outskirts of the city for the last two years, and fortunately that's why it is still here, "most of the shops in Christchurch were in the centre," owner Jason tells me. "When the earthquake hit we lost about 13 of them, which was about half the shops in the city." As you can imagine, in recent months they have been very busy. There are three full-time artists at the shop and they

cater for almost any style of tattooing. "Some artists are picky about what they do, but we do everything. Being a good all rounder is important; while a customer's tattoo might not be your taste, they are going to be wearing it, not you," explains Jason. My fleeting few days here pass very quickly and we are back on the road again discovering the South Island before we catch the ferry to the North.

Our first stop is Oamaru, a preserved Victorian town, which now holds an annual steampunk show and exhibition showcasing weird and wonderful contraptions. It feels rather odd being displayed in such a small



The Steampunk exhibition in Oamaru



The Resurgence pool



Earthquake hit Christchurch

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13

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town, but I think its isolation is what makes it so great. We then travelled to Invercargill, to pay homage to speed god, Burt Monroe's, world's fastest Indian. Next was Queenstown for some adrenaline action, then Wanaka and up to the Milford Sound for an awesome fjord experience, Greymouth next then across to Nelson.

As we drive through the many small towns and communities, you see a lot of tattoos, especially Maori designs, but very few studios. The bigger, more 'touristy' towns have them, but it really doesn't feel as mainstream here, even in newsagents it is hard to find tattoo magazines. Before we get the

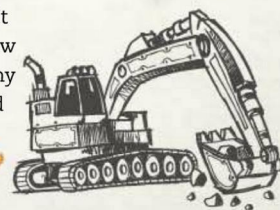
ferry to the North Island we stop in the small sleepy town of Motueka near the Abel Tasman National Park, where natural springs provide some of the most pure drinking water in the world. We visit the resurgence pool, where a river re-surfaces, which has been used by Maori people for centuries as a symbol of rebirth. As many travellers have done before us, we washed our hands, feet and faces in the water to leave behind everything and continue our journey afresh. Washing in the fresh cold water in the silent forest all alone, I certainly had a very calm and perhaps spiritual experience.

After a three-hour ferry ride we



Epic Ink Christchurch

arrive in the country's capital city, Wellington. It is a fairly small city but has the heart and soul of somewhere bigger; it's charming and full of cool bars and good cheap places to eat it. It is also home to Weta, which is the New Zealand based special effects company responsible for creating creatures and weapons for The Lord Of The Rings films, among many others. The city





as a whole has a very creative vibe, but surprisingly in the centre there are only four tattoo shops, three of which are along the very cool Cuba St, and this is where I will be spending my week, at Alc Headquarters.

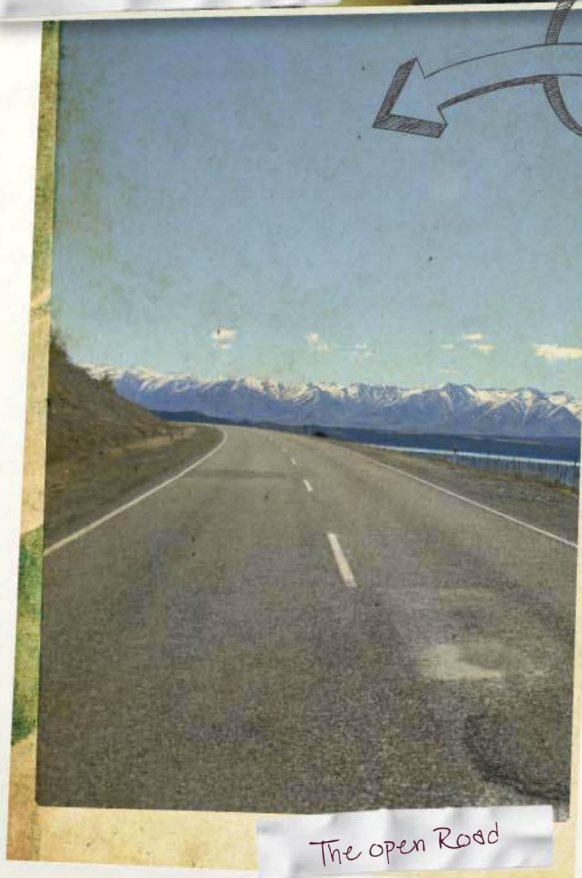
Alc is the brainchild of Guy, who is a totally awesome host for our time in the city. The brand started life as skate apparel and then four years ago the store was opened to give the brand a high street face. Recently the label has launched an awesome 'artist series', with shirt designs by tattoo artists such as Sam Rulz, Buggy and Jelle Nelemans. Three artists work in the shop: Simon Morse who was a well-known comic



The thermal landscapes of Taupo



Hanging out with Gollum



The open Road



South Island Local

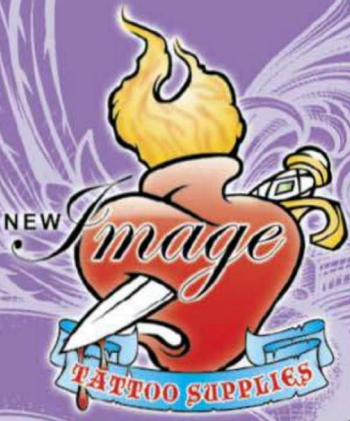
book artist and now brings that style to his tattoo work; Cam who specialises in very beautiful soft black and grey work; and Ali who puts out traditional old school inspired tattoos.

The shop is very friendly and relaxed and the week here goes by all too quickly, and with plenty of goings-on thrown in. Firstly fireworks celebrations (yes they celebrate the November 5 here, and yes I'm a kid at heart), and then a surprise visit from Damien Echols who had been flown over by filmmaker, Peter Jackson, to work on a documentary. I won't go into all the details, but google the 'West Memphis Three' and find

the ordeal this fellow has endured - amazing guy to have met. Next time I visit New Zealand I will definitely be staying in Wellington for longer! But for now, we hit the road to explore the volcanic landscapes of Taupo and Rotarua and marvel at the wonders of their thermal parks, where steam seeps up from craters in the ground, geysers erupt daily shooting boiling water or mud up to 30-foot into the air, and you can swim in natural hot streams and waterfalls.

Continues next month... 🐾

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A spy in THE HOUSE OF LOVE

The Amsterdam Tattoo Museum is surely the greatest shrine to the culture of tattooing there could ever be. Walk with us through the labyrinth:

Pascal Bagot

THE CURATOR: HANK SCHIFFMACHER

For Hank Schiffmacher, a legend in the tattoo scene in Europe, it's a big achievement. After decades of smaller museums displayed in his tattoo studios in Amsterdam, this long term project finally found a home for his obsession with this beautiful 14th century building, complete with 2,000sqm dedicated to what he likes to call 'the mother of all arts'. Close to the centre of the city and the flow of tourists, the museum is a journey in world history since the birth of mankind that explores the different cultures that can be found in tattooing traditions. Pictures, sculptures, mummies, weapons, idols; all of these items are part of Hank's personal collection or were donations. All reflect the diversity of mankind and its association with tattoo history in luminous spaces over two floors – what Hank likes to call 'The Tattiican'.

"I'm very happy with it, but I'm not completely satisfied – I think you should never be, because when you're satisfied, then you die. At the opening there was so many fucking people, it is easy to say 'I'm a genius'. I had a lot of compliments, but that's dangerous. I don't like compliments. I'd rather people told me I'm an asshole so that it makes me mad, then I'll do whatever I have to do. I'm not an emotional person, but once or twice the opening nearly left me in tears. I got some wonderful presents from Horiyoshi III and we were on the phone during the opening. Loretta Leu, Filip and Luke Atkinson came here, Petelo Suluape's brother was here... it was a really emotional moment.

"There are many of us in the tattoo world who have a small section in our shops dedicated to the history of tattoo, which are often referred to as 'the museum'. The last one I had was



WE ARE THE MOTHER OF ALL ARTS,
 THE FIRST ART MAN EVER MADE WAS
 PROBABLY ON HIS OWN BODY, AND THAT
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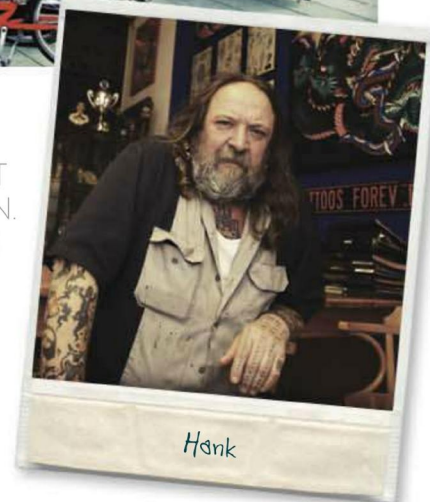
about 200sqm, and it was successful – it brought us about 23,000 people a year. But until now, nobody had created an official museum and that was always on my mind, I always wanted to create something that the tattoo world deserved. We are the mother of all arts! The first art man ever made was probably on his own body, and makes tattoo the oldest profession. They always say prostitution is the oldest profession, but the first hooker had a tattoo!"

GENESIS

"I lost my shop before 2000 due to all kinds of circumstances that are not really important anymore, because we are ahead of that already. I also had

to close down the museum because I lost the support for it. I brought everything to the house and I put it in boxes, which is worthless, because nobody sees it and you don't see it and at a certain point I had to pay the bills and I couldn't. So, officials came in and they wanted to confiscate stuff and the conversation went something like: 'I have to confiscate everything, I need to register everything you have.' 'Send me five of your people that will stay for a couple of months so they can write down what I have.'

"Then, some people from university wanted to investigate all the stuff 🙄"



Hank



A SPY IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE







I WILL ALWAYS FIND THE MONEY I NEED TO BUY SOMETHING IF I THINK I NEED TO HAVE IT. THAT'S MY JOB NOW. I'M THE CURATOR, THE COLLECTOR, THE CARETAKER, THE EXPOSER.

and I said, 'OK, take it out from the boxes, describe it, and then call some museum and ask them about it. If you come with a good plan for what you would do with this collection, I would give it to you.'

The museums came back saying: 'We would rather see this collection stay together, because there's the character of the curator in that. We would rather see you open your own museum.'

"And from that moment, a group of Dutch museum people helped me to set up a system in which I could create a museum – I got money from a donor too. We didn't buy the building, but we made the building fit the museum; we have plans to buy the building in ten years.

GIVING SOMETHING BACK

"The idea is to help people who are long-term unemployed to get back in society. Some come from jail, and have had some alcohol or drug problems... they go into a training program, work here for one or two years and get paid by the government. That puts them back in society where they are

considered normal again.

It's a social project and the older I get,

I get involved in all kinds of social projects – maybe because I have to clear my own past too. We all have a little dirt on our shirts from long ago, so I need to clean a little bit off me before I meet my maker.

"Otherwise, my big plan is actually to make a yearly expedition to somewhere in the world to register a dying or vanishing part of tattoo, to get primitive tattooing from the world list of culture and heritage registered with Unesco; that's what we're working on now. So I'm not done yet."

THE MUSEUM ITSELF

"On the ground floor, you walk into this world and you see most of the primitive tattoo collection; the second floor sort of starts in 1891. It's a very big collection. There is contemporary art in the shape of doors, stencils, flash, sketches, toys, dolls, clothing from old artists, circus banners, big posters on the walls...



"People gave me a lot. This is the beginning and we called this the Tattican. You have the Vatican and this is the Tattican! We are in 2011 ad. That will change, from now on we will start counting from the year 1891. This will be year zero for us – the year the electric tattoo machine was invented, so it will be 'Before Reilly' and 'After Reilly', and now we live in the year 119 A.R., and after December 8 we will be in 120.

"I'm turning 60 next year, on March 22 – people can send me presents – but I'd like people to help me by keeping their eyes open. If they see something for sale from an antique dealer or in an auction house which is important for the museum, I will

always find the money I need to buy something if I think I need to have it. That's my job now. I'm the curator, the collector, the caretaker, the exposor...

"It will surely take another couple of years to make it exactly the way I want it. I don't like to have stuff in boxes, I like to show people what

we have. Also, I want it to be like a 19th century-style museum. So far we digitised about 30,000 items and I think there are about another 30,000 items still to do.

"Right now, I'm trying to find a Coptic tattoo shop folder from Egypt. The Coptic people are in a lot of trouble at this moment, it's very unstable in the world of Africa. I'm looking for early criminology stuff, jail-art, old flash... everything. Out of everything, I like the jailhouse tattoos best, because I like the circumstances in which it has been made – it's also very inventive in terms of finding needles, pigments, burning clothing, paper, mixing with urine, semen or whatever. It's very primitive and very provocative. I'm not afraid to show anything that was in tattoo history, especially the dark stuff. If you have something, come see me!" 🍷



EXODUS

"I started years ago – in 1971 I think. I started as a photographer when I visited Tattoo Peter in Amsterdam to take pictures of tattooed people. I met an old sailor called Cadaver – he was a notorious drunk, but had these beautiful tattoos and I kinda fell in love with it.

"I started collecting stuff as I wanted to make a book, but at that time a whole line of books came out – especially the Wroblewski's – but I thought they were all bullshit. They were just photography books with hardly any decent writing in there and I wanted a book to tell me something, to teach me something, and bring me into a world I don't know. I wanted these arts to be treated seriously and not to be the art of drunken idiots.

"I'm pretty sure that it is the communication of the tattoo that interested me. You can communicate with your face, your hair, your outfit, but the tattoos help me explain who the guy is. Tattoo is a very strong message that is often made of symbols, and these symbols quickly tell you the theme – almost like an alphabet for people that cannot read. It's a very strong language.

"Personally, I'm a mess! I got stuff from everywhere, but at a certain point my collection is also on my skin. I think I waited till 1974 to get my first tattoo, after I visited a tattoo convention in Hamburg and realised I was the only un-tattooed person in the place. I felt like a spy in the house of love, like a vegetarian butcher. And I believe you have to practice what you preach!"



REVELATION

"You can compare tattoo to the evolution of book printing in the last five years or so, there is a rich history before it. I think the big things have happened already; the invention of the electric machine was a revolution. I think the evolution probably means the disappearance of whole types of tattoo and the rebirth of a lot of old ones.

"At this moment, tattoo is so accessible for everybody, the Chinese sell you machines now and you order machines the same way you order Chinese food. In the old days, you had to work to get in on the secret, and so you had a big respect for your master or teacher. If you go to a convention nowadays, well, Paul Jeffries from Canada told me 'I ain't got to go to a convention. I have no idea who these people are, and these people have no idea who I am.' I like to see this museum as a monument for the old world of tattoo, and I hope that we are able to give the new world, at least the respect for the old world that it deserves.

"A lot of these young guys, if they're still there in 20 years, then they'll know. A lot of them will have disappeared though. They think it's really cool, really hip, but once they are married, they will need a more stable situation. It's too rock 'n' roll – a lot of their wives will not like it if they're tattooing somebody's pussy... it's not a job for just anybody. There're a lot of good artists at this moment.

IF YOU HAVE A COUPLE OF TATTOOS, YOU BELONG TO A GROUP OF TATTOOED PEOPLE. AND IN A GROUP OF TATTOO PEOPLE, THESE THINGS ARE PASSPORTS. IT WILL TAKE YOU INTO WORLDS NOBODY ELSE HAS EVER BEEN; IT WILL GIVE YOU ACCESS AND RESPECT IN THESE WORLDS

And that's a bit of a problem because, if you think you're already there, then it's over.

"A good photographer will always try to produce his best picture before he dies. In two years you cannot be the world's best artist. The world's most promising artist? That you can be. This thing has an easy access to the rock 'n' roll world, where all of a sudden you feel like the hippest, the strongest, and women are around you – I know, I've been married five times. I know!"

THE LAST WORD

"I hope the museum gives people what I call 'pride in the hide'. I like people to realise that what they have is not fashion, they are not the dog tattoo on Paris Hilton's back – they belong to the tribe of the marks. We have a lifestyle, we should rule our own world, we kept our own culture on the heritage line. If you have a couple of tattoos, you belong to a group of tattooed people. And in a group of tattoo people, these things are passports. It will take you into worlds nobody else has ever been; it will give you access and respect in these worlds.

"Your life will change when you get a bunch of tattoos. We are a family, a world-wide family." 🐼

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DIXIE HIGHWAY

With the barrage of tattoo artists and shops popping up on what seems like every other street corner, it's becoming increasingly difficult to discover tattooers with a few surprises still hidden up their sleeves. So when someone like Matthew J. Hockaday comes around, it's happy days



Barbara Pavone Matthew Hockaday



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A few minutes into a conversation with Hockaday and it becomes evident that not all hope is lost, that perhaps there still are some artists in the industry who actually have a one of a kind story to tell that does not, for example, involve getting tattooed in a kitchen at the youngest age possible.

"Actually, I never had a tattoo until after I had already been tattooing for about six months. I didn't wanna fuck up my body," laughs

Hockaday, admitting a fact that is somehow oddly impressive in today's commercialised tattoo environment. "I was just sick of odd jobs, like delivering pizza and drilling wells."

Growing up with a father who "had many tattoos from his Navy days" meant Hockaday was surrounded by, and aware of, tattooing from early on in his life, but as he openly says, at that time, he didn't appreciate the art form for what it was. "Only after I saw my brother getting some good work did I realize that real artists

were doing great art on skin," he says.

An artistic force to be reckoned with, Hockaday is somewhat of a master of all forms, from canvas to paper to skin and even airbrushing. In fact, this past year he even had the chance to airbrush a helmet for Mike Tyson for an American television show, *Same Name*.

A 'traditional' artist first, painting for several years before he ever picked up a tattoo machine, there was no real eureka moment, no light bulb going off, in which Hockaday



I JUST LIKED MAKING MONEY AND DOING ART ALL DAY. IT WASN'T UNTIL LATER THAT I STARTED GETTING MORE TATTOOS BY BETTER ARTISTS AND ASKING QUESTIONS AND LEARNING SO MUCH THAT I REALLY BEGAN TO LOVE THE MEDIUM



TATTOOING IN WATERFORD

When asked if the city of Waterford has any effects on his creativity and the work he puts out, Hockaday admits, "If anything, it would be in a bad way because it's a nice town, but not that artsy. But I live in an area just outside of Detroit that is very hip and a great place to get inspired!"

decided to pursue tattooing full-time. It just kind of happened as part of a natural progression and as the result of a search to find a way to have a steady paycheck without a menial job. The discovery of tattooing's full artistic potential only came later.

"I just liked making money and doing art all day," he says. "I didn't take it that seriously for a while, it was just copying flash for three to four tattoos a day, just get the customer in and out. It wasn't until later that I started getting more

tattoos by better artists and asking questions and learning so much that I really began to love the medium."

But even if it was just all about the flash at the very beginning, that didn't, by any means, make Hockaday's first experience tattooing any less stressful. As he recalls it, "I was so scared! I had a big biker over my shoulder and I was tattooing a Cancer symbol that was, like, perfectly oval and all 3D looking on my best friend."

Hockaday has come a long way since that first symbol and now spends his days creating countless unique works of art on skin, most notably delivering unbelievably skilled portraits and other impeccably realistic designs.

"I love doing portraits and realism, it's so technical and, yeah, I really have to be present mentally for that kind of work," he enthuses. "There is something about doing a portrait that is very personal, but it



can be more stressful because you really wanna do your best to get the likeness that the customer expects."

Whether it's a cherished family member, a beloved cultural icon like Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dalí, or a rather striking tiger walking across someone's forearm, Hockaday's attention to every detail, no matter how small, and masterful use of shading give his creations depth and a true sense of life. The

TATTOO TRENDS IN WATERFORD

Who better to raise the question of Waterford's tattoo trends to than Hockaday, who has spent the past six years working in the area? "Not really. I guess I don't really pay much attention, [but] I think trends are similar wherever you go - more people getting sleeves and larger tattoos. It's better than tribal armbands and kanji!"



THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT DOING A PORTRAIT THAT IS VERY PERSONAL, BUT IT CAN BE MORE STRESSFUL BECAUSE YOU REALLY WANNA DO YOUR BEST TO GET THE LIKENESS THAT THE CUSTOMER EXPECTS

resulting tattoos are what I would almost describe as photographs on skin, so closely do they resemble the subjects they are striving to depict.

This is not to say that Hockaday is an artist who doesn't enjoy taking on any variety of differing styles that may come his way; alternating between full color and black and grey or playing with different canvases, each individual art form subtly influences and intertwines with the others he pursues.

"I feel like each medium feeds off the other. Like when I do ink drawings, I usually do them similar to the way I do a tattoo or do them for a tattoo," he says. But then again,

the non-tattoo works usually do have a special perk. "When I do oil painting, I usually get a chance to be a bit more free and express what I want and not what a customer wants."

Nowadays, Hockaday is working as one of four artists at Dixie Tattoo Co., alongside James Reed, R.J. Munger and Rob Lloyd. Located in Waterford, Michigan, the relatively small town that the shop calls home is about 35 miles Northwest of Detroit and has a population close to 72,000.

It's only been a couple of years that Hockaday has been tattooing out of Dixie Tattoo Co. and, as he recounts, there were some



considerable bumps in the road to confront before he found himself where he is today.

"I had been in that area for, like, six years when I split from the shop I was at to open a shop with my friend John. And, long story short, that didn't work out, so after two years, the crew and I decided to take over another shop in the area. That's where we've been for the last two years. It's a great crew of really talented artists and we all have different styles."

With so much time spent tattooing, it goes without saying that an odd request must surely pop up occasionally, and for Hockaday,

although it happened several years back, his strangest tattoo experience to date has never quite left him and may be rather difficult to surpass.

"This was about six years ago, I had a kid and his mom come in the shop and he brought me a picture of a manga girl on her knees, leaning back, and a cat was licking her crotch. The kid was like 16 and his mom signed for him. He cried the whole time while his mother sat beside him and comforted his pain – the whole thing was strange!" he laughs.

But although that sounds like quite the exciting session if you ask me, when it comes to a dream 🌟

WHEN I DO OIL PAINTING, I USUALLY GET A CHANCE TO BE A BIT MORE FREE AND EXPRESS WHAT I WANT AND NOT WHAT A CUSTOMER WANTS





appointment, the ultimate client at the top of Hockaday's list is none other than one of the quirkiest men around, Johnny Depp.

"He's one of my favorite actors and I really would like to get his take on life and art," he says. And given free reign over Depp's skin, he'd opt for nothing less than "a portrait of him as Hunter S. Thompson, of course."

Considering Depp was a fan and long-time friend of the equally unique and fascinating journalist and author, it sounds like it may be time for Mister Depp to get on over to Dixie Tattoo Co. to add a permanent homage to Thompson to his tattoo collection.



FAMILY SUPPORT

Families can sometimes be on the fence about tattooing, but not in this artist's case. "If anything, my family was really supportive. I worked on my brother many times and I think my mom and dad were just happy that I was making money doing something I enjoyed."



"HE'S ONE OF MY FAVORITE ACTORS AND I REALLY WOULD LIKE TO GET HIS TAKE ON LIFE AND ART." GIVEN FREE REIGN OVER DEPP'S SKIN, HE'D OPT FOR NOTHING LESS THAN 'A PORTRAIT OF HIM AS HUNTER S. THOMPSON, OF COURSE'



Spending his free time with his daughter and playing golf – "if I wasn't into art I would most likely pursue professional golf" – Hockaday is keen to point out that, no matter what, his artwork is never left too far behind, explaining, "life and art, they are both the same to me."

The driven artist that is Matthew J. Hockaday has undoubtedly evolved greatly since his early years in the industry, which were filled with flash and uncertainties about the

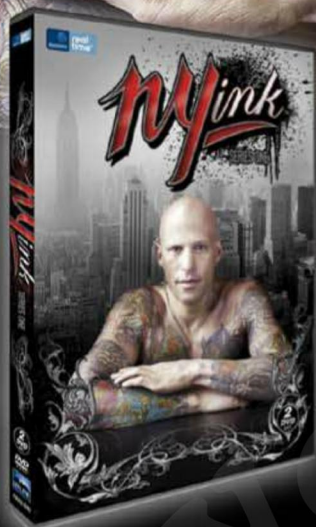
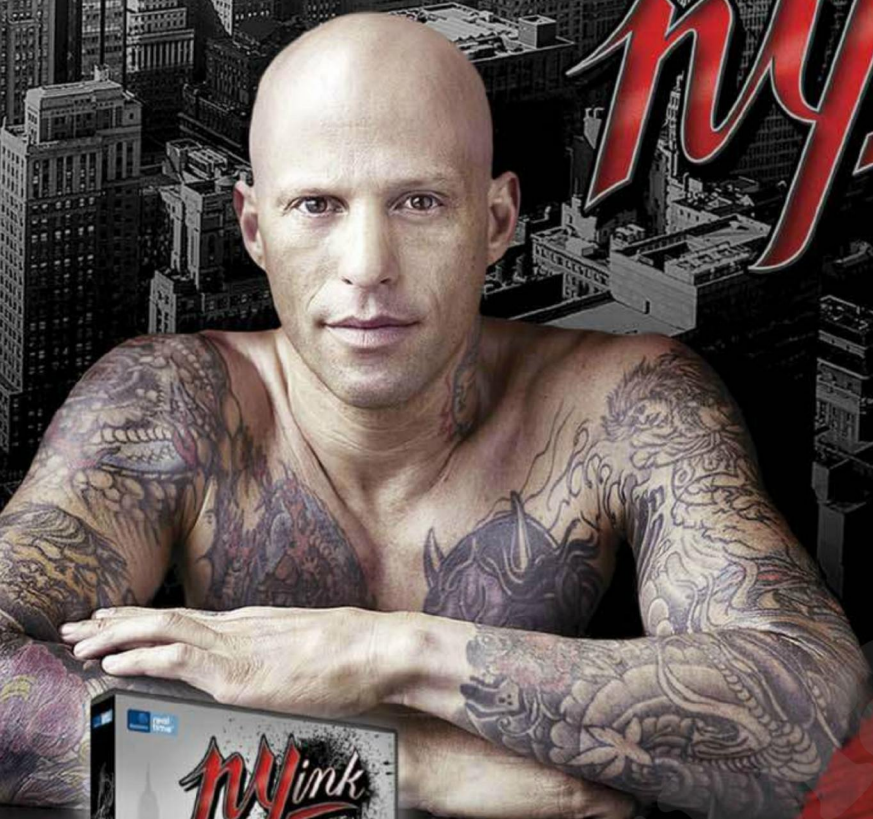
legitimacy of tattooing as an art form. With 11 years of tattooing and 15 years of painting making up his repertoire, it's safe to say he has solidified himself as a master of portraiture and realism.

Which only really leaves one question: What's the most surprising thing that Hockaday can reveal about himself? After a moment, he laughs, "I was working security back in college and got to get high with the Grateful Dead!" 🐉

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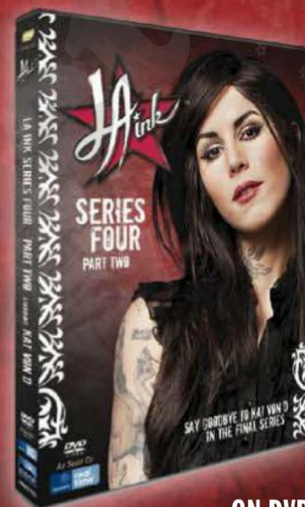
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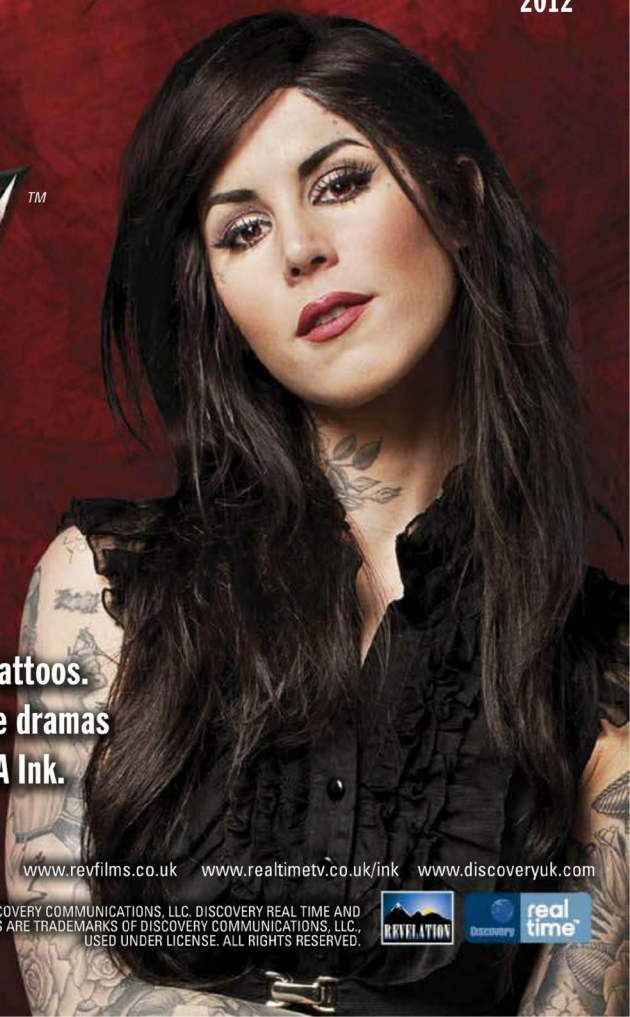


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HELL ON WHEELS

Hell's Ass Derby Girls, Strasbourg p-mod

With Tattoo Freeze right upon us, we're looking forward to some more carnage from the Roller Derby we host each year. To help us all look forward to girls getting rough with each other, we proudly present a fantastic photo shoot we knocked up recently with Strasbourg's Hell's Ass Derby Girls... bring it!

RULES & HISTORY

Roller derby is a contact sport played by two teams of five members roller skating in the same direction around a track. Gameplay consists of a series of short matchups ('jams') in which both teams designate a scoring player (the 'jammer') who scores points by lapping members of the opposing team. The teams attempt to assist their own jammer while hindering the opposing jammer – in effect playing both offense and defence simultaneously. Roller derby is played by more than 1,000 amateur leagues across every inhabited continent.

While the sport has its origins in the banked-track roller skating marathons of the 1930s, professional roller derby quickly became popular; in 1940 more than five million spectators watched bouts in 50 US cities. In the ensuing decades, however, it predominantly became a form of sports entertainment where the theatrical elements overshadowed the athleticism. This gratuitous showmanship largely ended with the sport's contemporary grassroots revival in the first decade of the 21st century. Although some sports entertainment qualities, such as player pseudonyms and colourful uniforms were retained, scripted bouts with predetermined winners were abandoned.



Bloody
veggie



→
Vitriol
sunset



La
buse



★
Johnny
velvet



→
Fresh's
'n' pink



Mad
cat



Wilhelm's
— x —

ASSIST

A motion administered by one player to help another player (usually the jammer) gain advantage. An assist can include pushing, pulling, redirecting, or whipping another skater.

BLOCKER

A skater whose job is to stop or block the other team's jammer from passing while also enabling her own team's jammer to score. Typically, there are four blockers per team on the track, including the pivot. The remaining blocker positions are often referred to by number: two, three, and four, usually with the pivot at the front and the four at the back.

BOUT

One roller derby 'game' or 'match', which lasts 60 minutes and, per WFTDA 4.0, is divided into two 30-minute periods.

FRESH MEAT

New recruits...

HIP WHIP

A form of assist in which a player (usually the jammer) grabs her teammate's hips to swing herself forward.

HIT

When a skater makes forceful contact with another skater.

HOT LAP

Used in drills or practice – a lap skated as quickly as possible, either until the original starting point or until the skater catches up with the pack or pace line she departed.

JAM

A two-minute period during which the action happens. The jam may last less than two minutes if the lead jammer decides to call off the jam. There may be any number of jams in a bout.

**JAMMER**

The skater on the track who can score points. The jammer is identifiable by the star on her helmet. The jammer starts each jam behind the pack. After she has lapped the pack once (known as a nonscoring pass), she is eligible to score points for each subsequent skater she laps.

NSO

A nonskating official. The NSO helps with various referee duties during the outs, including penalty tracking, timing the penalty box, keeping track of points, and collecting data for later statistical analysis.

PACK

The mass of blockers from both teams skating around the track together. Each jammer's goal is to get through or around the pack.

STAR

The symbol on a helmet patty that indicates the jammer.

Source: Silicon valley roller girls' blog





Bloody
veggie

Leanka at Lucky Electric, Strasbourg



La
buse

Morgane - Sour&Sweet, Strasbourg



★
Johnny
velvet

Boat : Ezeikel, Toulouse
Anchor: Moustache Tattoo - Strasbourg



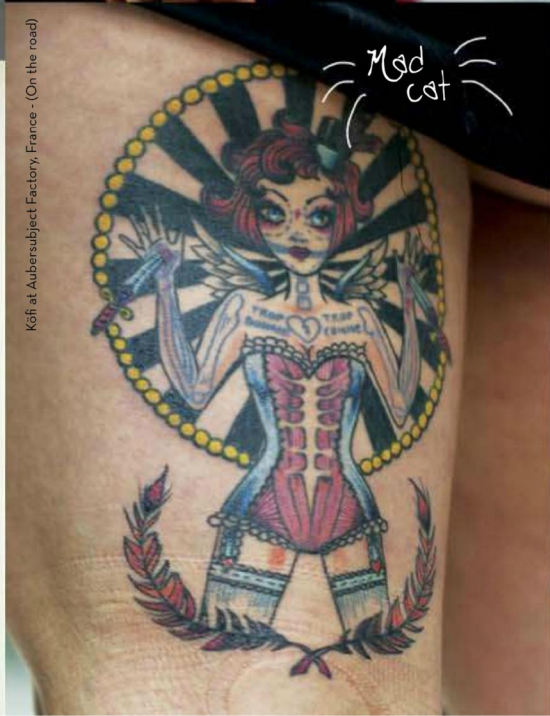
→
Vitriol
sunset

Kofi at Aubersubject Factory, France - (On the road)



→
Freak's
n pink

Kofi at Aubersubject Factory, France - (On the road)

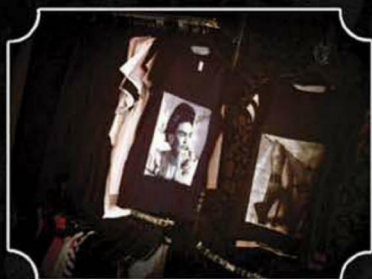


Mod
cat

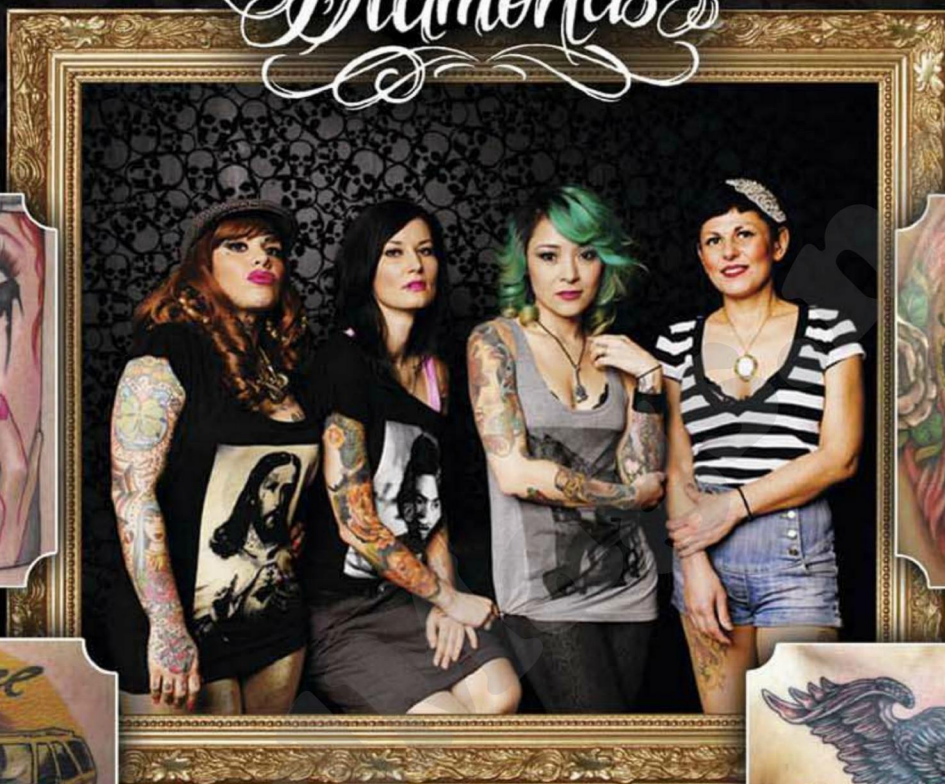
Joe Capobianco, USA



Wilhelmina
— x —



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Trent Atken-Smith Kevin Marr

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"I decided I wanted to get into tattooing as soon as I got my first tattoo when I was 18. I had been drawing a lot of tattoo art and was at that time in my life where I needed to figure out 'what I was going to do'. I have no formal art training. I taught myself how to draw, spent a lot of time looking at tattoo magazines, and figured out who was good and

why they were good. I think that's one of the most important things, being able to understand what looks good, what doesn't, and why?"

"I began to pursue being a tattooer by bringing my portfolio of drawings to tattoo shops and asking about apprenticeships. I knew I wanted to make a career out of this and wanted to do it the right way, despite my friends encouraging me to buy some equipment and start on them; I knew how I needed to go about it. In the beginning, I was continually denied, demoralized and discouraged at every shop. But this just fed me and made me push harder. I was going to do this!"

And with a little bit of luck and a lot of hard work, Kevin's path suddenly changed.

"One day, kind of out of nowhere,



a new shop opened up in my area – this was the end of 1998. I walked in with my portfolio and met a guy named Turtle, who had just moved out here from New Jersey and opened Godspeed Tattoo in San Mateo, California. He was actually looking for an apprentice, so he told me to come hang out when I had free time. I knew what that actually meant, come in every fucking day and clean my shop! So I did. Turtle got me going and was a really good teacher. I am extremely grateful to



I KNEW HOW I NEEDED TO GO ABOUT IT. IN THE BEGINNING, I WAS CONTINUALLY DENIED, DEMORALIZED AND DISCOURAGED AT EVERY SHOP. BUT THIS JUST FED ME AND MADE ME PUSH HARDER. I WAS GOING TO DO THIS

him for this. He was tough, but you have to be tough in this business. And I respect him for not making it easy for me.

"I was a carpenter at the time and would work swinging a hammer from 7.00am-4:30pm; Monday to Friday. I was at the tattoo shop from 5:30pm until midnight, on the days I worked, and 12 noon till midnight on a Saturday and Sunday. Needless to say, I gave up everything to learn how to tattoo.

"Turtle eventually got homesick, I don't think he really liked it here, and after a year or so, he sold me the shop and moved back to New Jersey. He still lives and works as a tattooer, at the Jersey Tattoo Company in Toms River. 🐢





"I only worked on my own for a couple months, then hired my first guy, Brian Fokis. We were both just starting out and very eager. It was a great time for the shop, we really grew from and with each other."

So, one year into an apprenticeship and Kevin suddenly found himself the owner of his own studio. With nobody to teach him the finer details of tattooing, Kevin decided to take a rather unconventional path to learn more.

"I was stoked on one hand because I was tattooing and owned my own shop at the age of 22. Things had finally worked out for me – but on the other hand, I completely missed out on working with other tattooers with whom I could grow from those first few years. I barely knew how to tattoo and I owned a shop. I had to make this work.

"I decided the only way I would be able to expose myself to more experienced tattooers would be to get tattooed by them. So off I went. I had Ed Hardy do two full sleeves on

I WAS A CARPENTER AT THE TIME AND WOULD WORK SWINGING A HAMMER FROM 7.00AM-4.30PM; MONDAY TO FRIDAY. I WAS AT THE TATTOO SHOP FROM 5.30PM UNTIL MIDNIGHT, ON THE DAYS I WORKED, AND 12 NOON TILL MIDNIGHT ON A SATURDAY AND SUNDAY



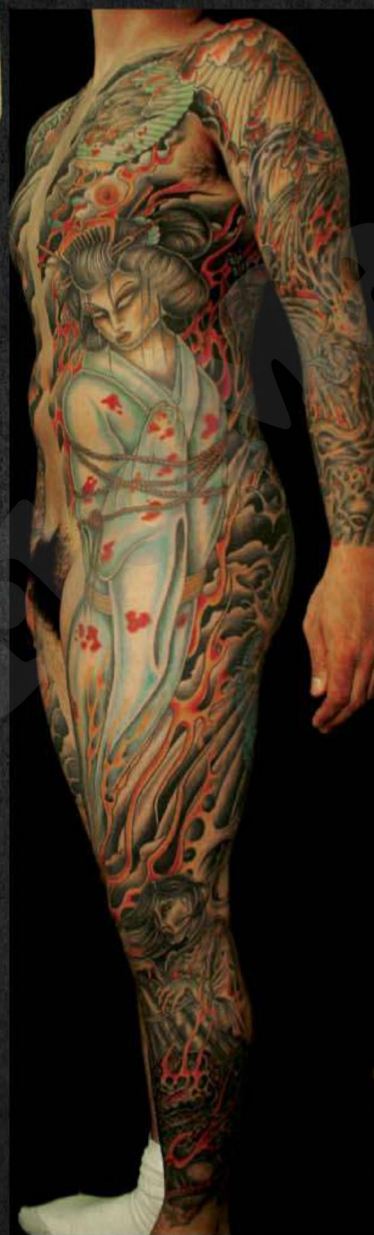


me. Jeff Whitehead did a ton of work on me as well. I would pick their brains as much as I could, while still being respectful, and I learned a lot by getting tattooed by them. I also have a tattoo in progress by Mike Rubendall. These days, I'm really feeling like I missed out on working with other tattooers and I am going to make an effort to get out there a bit in this business. Do some guest spots and conventions.

It's not just his thirst for knowledge that drives Kevin, it is his approach as well. Not afraid of hard work and long hours, you just know that he's in it for love and not money or the supposed glamorous lifestyle.

"People think this shit is easy because the only part of it they witness is the guy tattooing them; hanging out, talking shit, having a good time. Nobody sees the artist 🌸"

I DECIDED THE ONLY WAY I WOULD BE ABLE TO EXPOSE MYSELF TO MORE EXPERIENCED TATTOOERS WOULD BE TO GET TATTOOED BY THEM. SO OFF I WENT. I HAD ED HARDY DO TWO FULL SLEEVES ON ME. JEFF WHITEHEAD DID A TON OF WORK ON ME AS WELL



up at 5am working on drawings until they start tattooing at midday, sometimes even 10am. Then you tattoo non-stop till eight at night and then you're off back home to draw or paint till midnight. Every fucking day. It aint a quick buck or easy money. I work my ass off. And to top it off, I'm never satisfied! It's a constant struggle. I've done lots of physically demanding laborious work in my younger days and nothing is as hard as tattooing. Physically and mentally, it beats the shit out of you. But that's what separates people in this business. The more you put in, the more you get out of it and that's what I love about it. There is always room to grow – if you push yourself."

But the constant struggle paid off for Kevin, and Godspeed Tattoo. 14 years later and Kevin shares his studio with three other artists.

"Right now the crew is Nick Bergin, Bryn Taylor, and Dustin Richards. Nick was my apprentice, and has been tattooing for nine years; he's a really good guy, and a solid tattooer. Bryn has been tattooing for 19 years and has worked with me for four; he's had the opportunity to work with lots of great tattooers in San Francisco during the '90s and is a solid guy and also a great tattooer. Dustin has been working here for



NOBODY SEES THE ARTIST UP AT 5AM WORKING ON DRAWINGS UNTIL THEY START TATTOOING AT MIDDAY, SOMETIMES EVEN 10AM. YOU TATTOO NON-STOP TILL EIGHT AT NIGHT AND THEN YOU'RE OFF BACK HOME TO DRAW OR PAINT TILL MIDNIGHT. EVERY FUCKING DAY. IT AINT A QUICK BUCK OR EASY MONEY

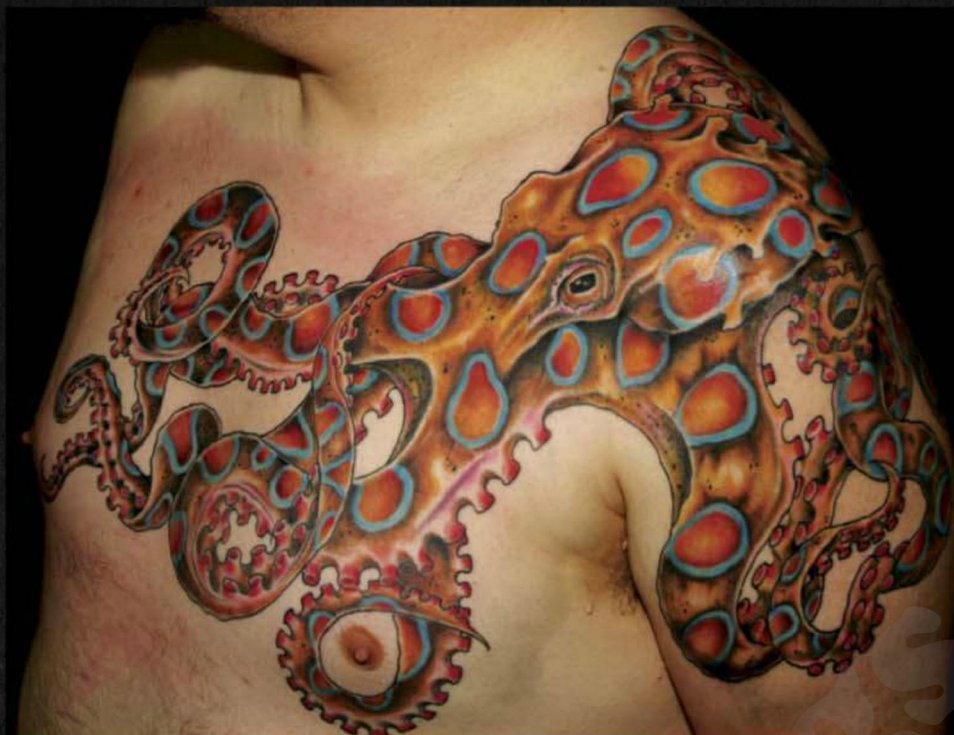
six months and came up from San Diego; he fits in well and does real nice work.

"I'm very particular about who works here, for two reasons. I have high standards, and I have to get along with the person, and they

have to get along with everyone else. There is no drama here, we are all good friends and genuinely enjoy being around each other. It's important. We probably spend more time with each other than we do with our wives.



KEVIN MARR



I JUST HOPE THINGS CONTINUE TO GO AS WELL IN THE FUTURE, AS THEY HAVE IN THE PAST. I WOULD LIKE TO START TRAVELLING MORE, AND DOING GUEST SPOTS. I REALLY NEED TO GET OUT THERE AND EXPOSE MYSELF A BIT MORE, GET TO KNOW OTHER TATTOOERS, AND WORK IN DIFFERENT PLACES

"So now I have three other artists who work with me at the shop and I am able to stick to the type of stuff I love doing. I stay booked up for a few weeks, work six days a week tattooing, and paint on my days off. If I am not sleeping, I am doing something productive."

And this can only mean more top quality output from Kevin in the future. So times look good.

"I just hope things continue to go as well in the future, as they have in the past. I would like to start travelling more, and doing guest spots. I really need to get out there and expose myself a bit more, get to know other tattooers, and work in different places. I came to realize that I have spent the past 13 years, only tattooing in my own shop, and I don't want to spend my entire career in one place. I'd like to take advantage of what this business has to offer in terms of travelling and working with other tattooers who I can grow and learn from."

Stay tuned ink fans... 🌟

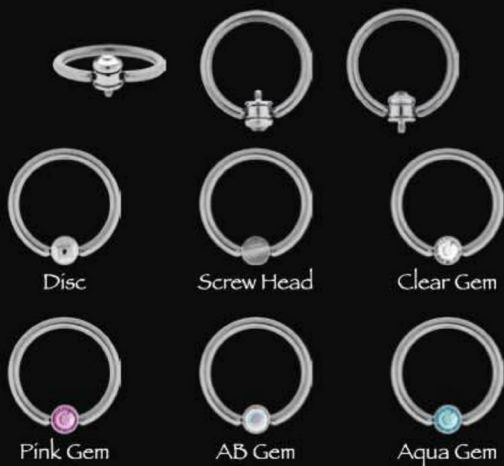




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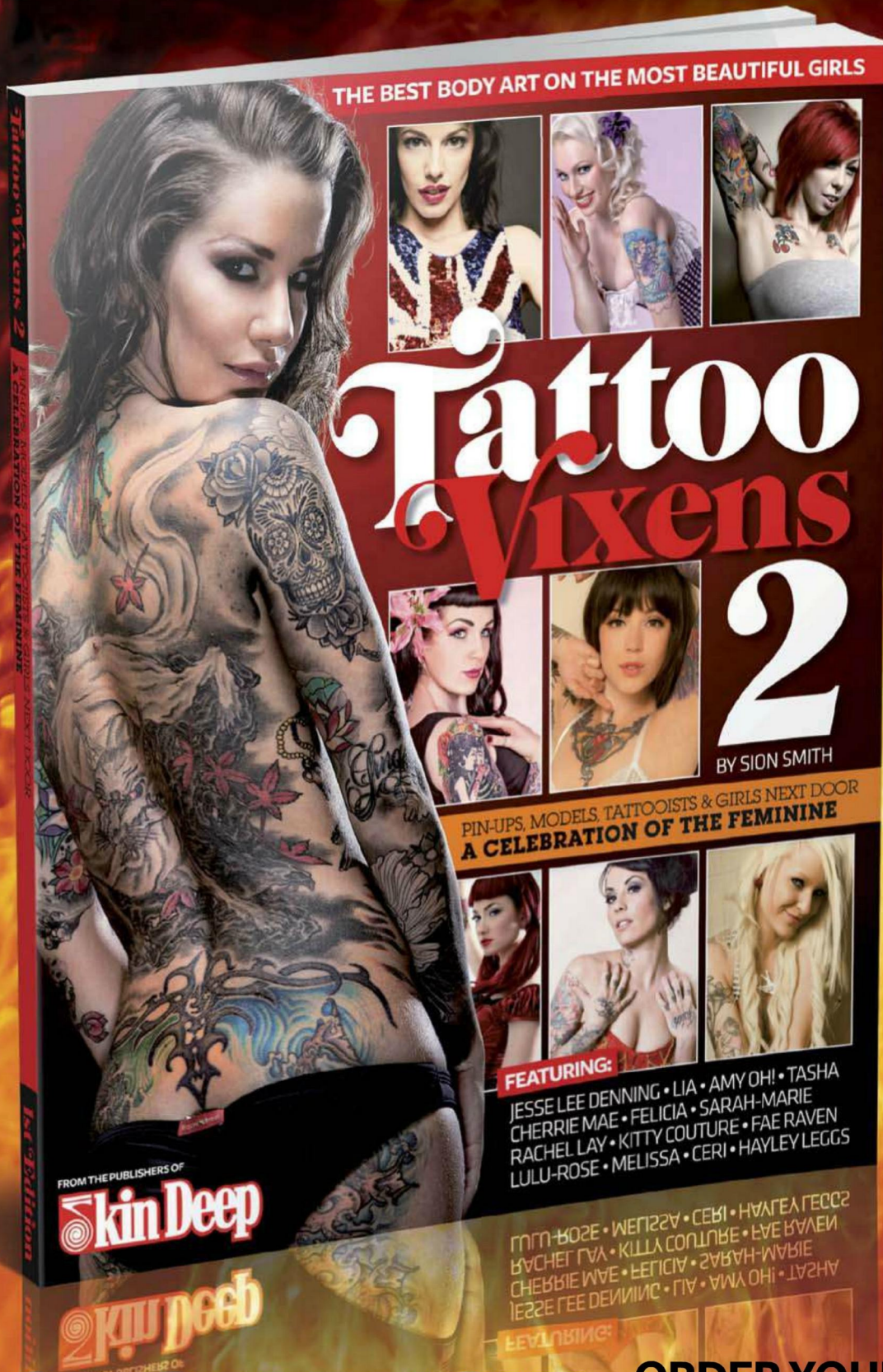
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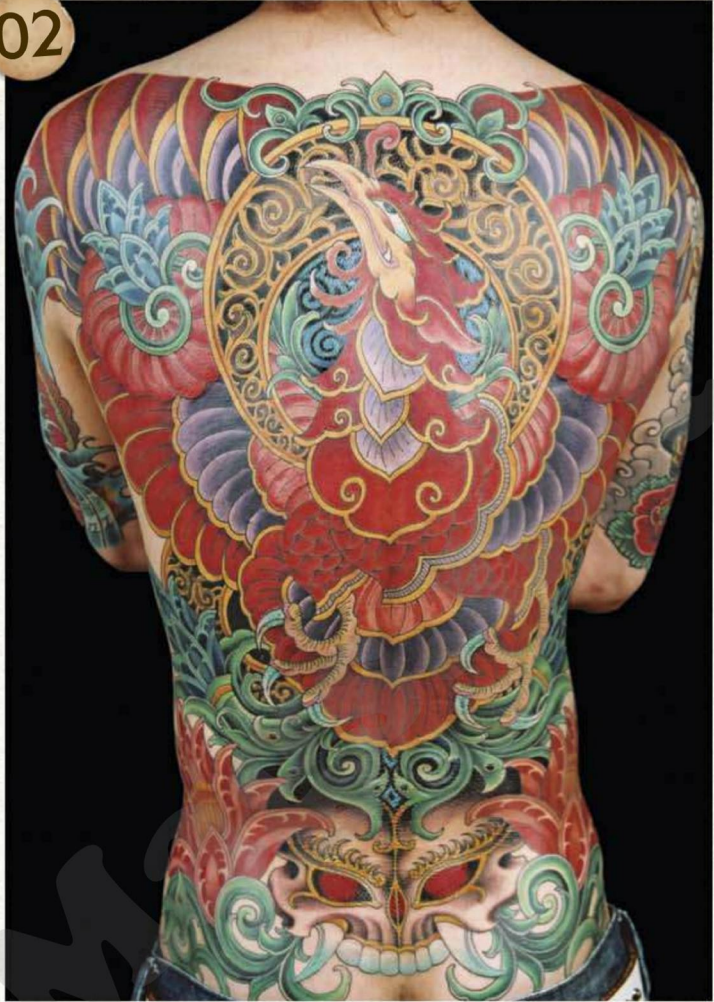
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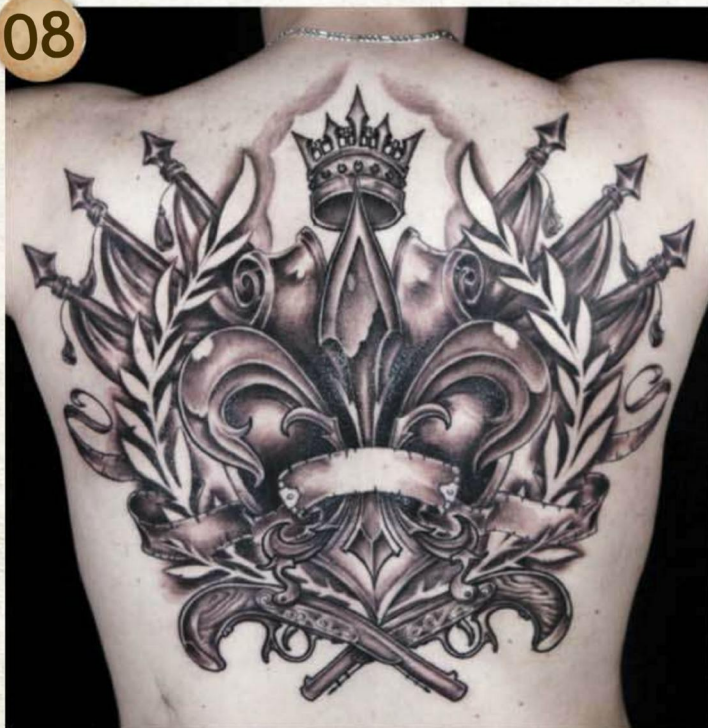
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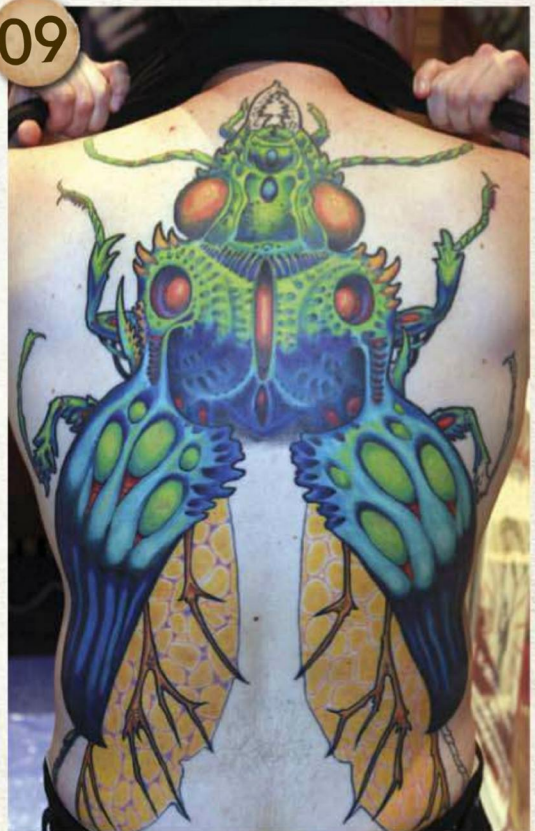
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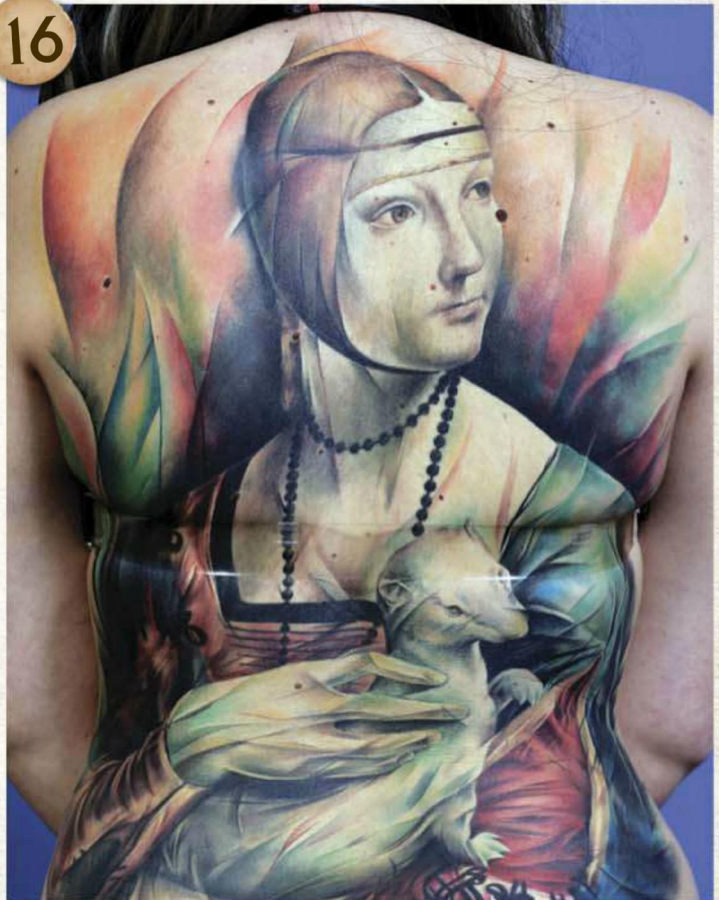
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JAEN PIERRE, IMAGO

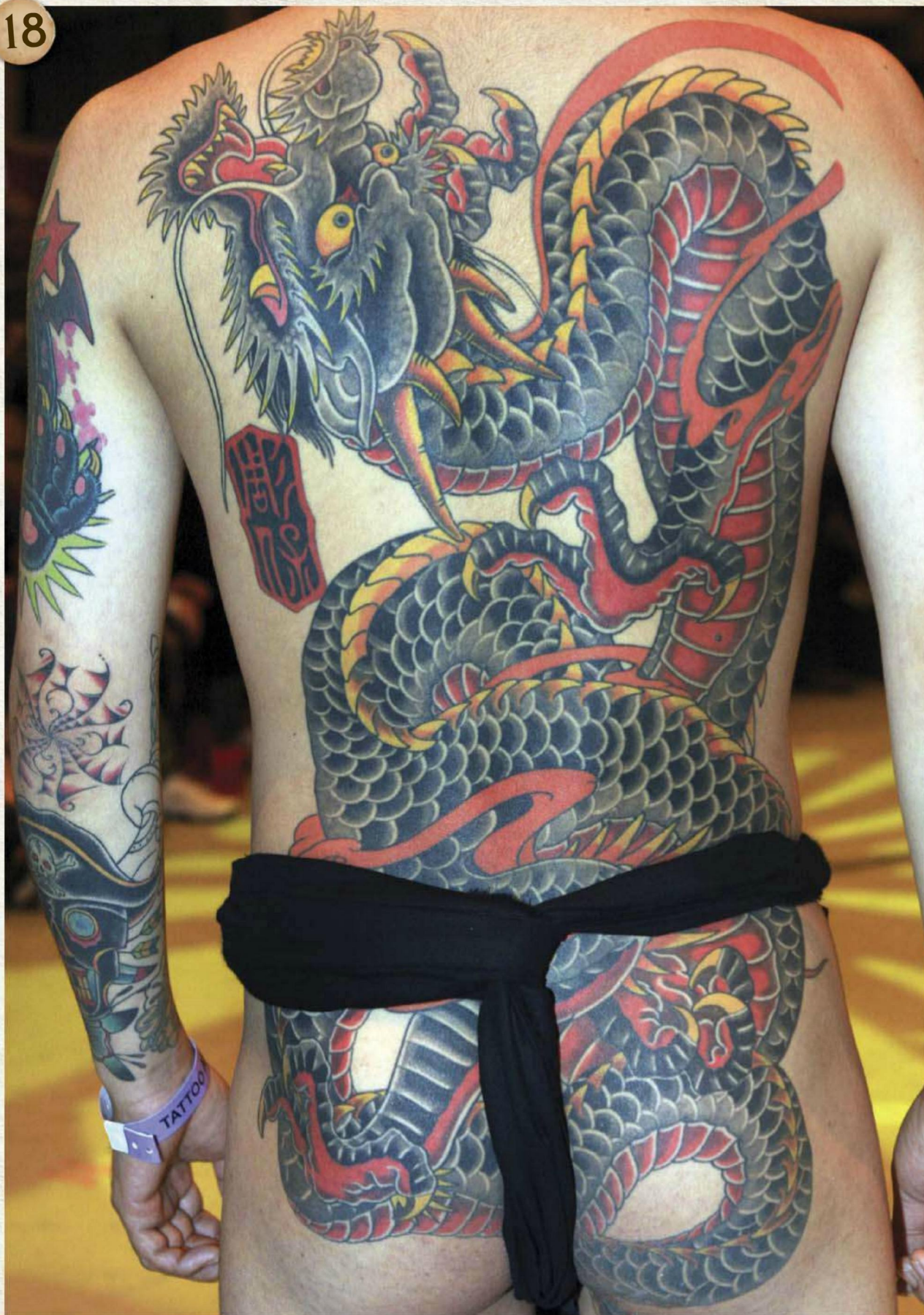
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PAIN ART TATTOO

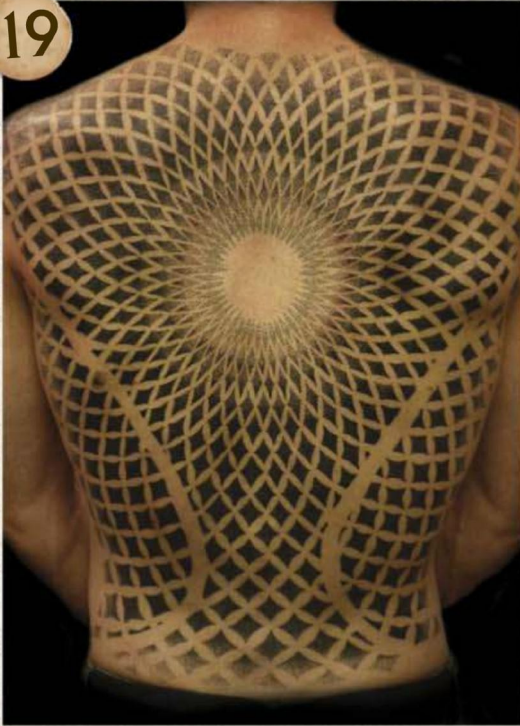


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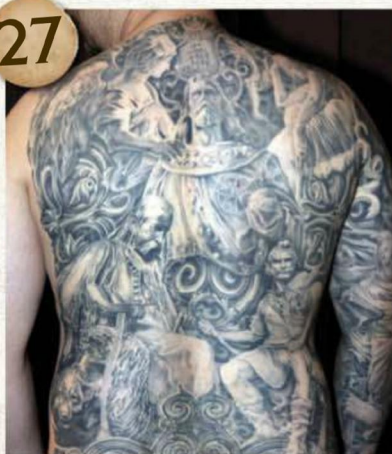
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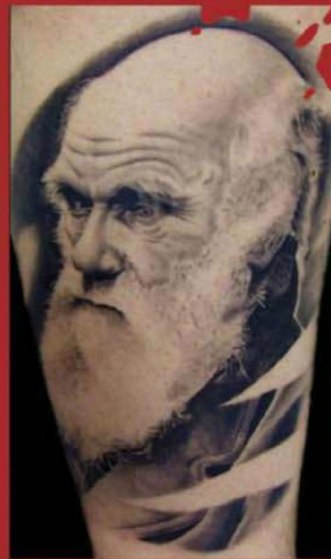
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ALEC PHATT

If you were hanging out at Bristol University around 2006, you might have crossed paths with two likely lads, Alex Brown and Ben Lakin. At the time, Alex and Ben were studying economics and marketing, but a mutual interest in tattooing was to push them onto another life path altogether...

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Trent Atten-Smith No Regrets

Jump forward five years and the duo have two of the most respected tattoo studios in the UK – No Regrets Cheltenham and No Regrets Gloucester – as well as a supply company that is making a mark on the tattoo world.

So how did this pairing come to create a mini-empire in the tattoo world? Well, for once, it seems like it started out with a plan rather than haphazardly stumbling into a world of machines, skin art and ink.

"Before we started the studio, we were pretty unsure what we wanted to do. We'd both had jobs we hated in the past and we wanted to do something we'd be passionate about getting up in the morning for.

Something we didn't dread every day. Our interest in tattooing led us down this road and we started to plan. Plus obviously we started at 10am and we'd be lying if we said that wasn't an attractive prospect!

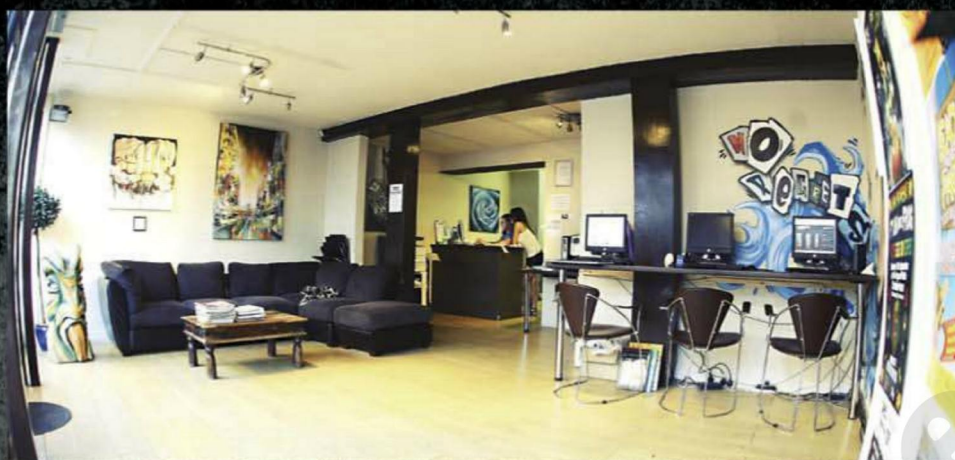
"We were both quite intelligent kids, but we couldn't sit still or behave a lot of the time. An office job was never going to inspire us, being self-employed and doing our own thing was pretty inevitable. Both of us had set up little side line businesses while we were still at school, earning a few quid here and there. We've both always had that entrepreneurial spirit; it's probably why we became friends in the first place. When you get down to the



bare bones, a tattoo studio is a business, albeit a different type to your average corporate. It's a strange concept for a businessman to not focus solely on profit; to understand that this type of business was about more than the money was essential. It needs to be nurtured in order to be successful, and success isn't

**ALEC (PHATT) -
CHELTENHAM**

I started tattooing in Sweden five years ago. I began in the industry in an apprenticeship where nothing was made easy for me. Two years ago, shortly after my son was born, I decided to make a new start in the UK. I have been working for No Regrets for around a year now. My preferred styles are Japanese and realism. I also have a passion for skulls and all things dead! I spent the first four years using coil machines and was recently introduced to the 'Swashdrive G7' and 'Whip' and I love them. They have changed the way I work and I think it is for the best. At the moment, I am really enjoying my Japanese work. The imagery fascinates me and I enjoy the challenge of composing a piece to get that very important flair. I enjoy most styles and I would say I am a bit of an all-rounder. My main influences are Aaron Della Vedova, Jeff Gogue and Carlos Torres to name but a few - plus my colleagues of course. I am humbled by the reception I received in the UK and the attention my work has received. I have got a Tattoo Master tutorial out man, who would have thought it?



WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO THE BARE BONES, A TATTOO STUDIO IS A BUSINESS, ALBEIT A DIFFERENT TYPE TO YOUR AVERAGE CORPORATE

measured by figures in this industry.

"The studio was in planning for around a year, lots of late nights dreaming up the ethos and set up and the possibilities of how we could achieve them. We had a few friends in the industry and our first artist, Nik, worked at a studio Ben was regularly tattooed at. He was leaving and wanted something new. Ben would grill him on the ins and outs of how a studio worked and after realising the potential, asked him if he would like to work for us.

"Apart from us wanting quality tattooing leaving the studio, one of our main aims was to provide a decent working environment for our artists. Not just in terms of their



surroundings but their working life in general. We felt that this would allow them to concentrate on what they do best - tattooing. Meanwhile we took care of the business side

of things, from promotion and conventions to admin. The balance seemed to work well. We made the decision from day one to stock the shop with supplies ourselves, not only is it one less thing for our artists to worry about, but it also ensured no corners need ever be cut. After a lot of thought, planning and expense, No Regrets Cheltenham opened its doors in 2008.

"Looking back, maybe we jumped in feet first. We were fairly uneducated to start with - we had all the enthusiasm, just no real knowledge, even though we thought we did. It's been a constant learning curve and we had to make it our business to learn fast. We'd spend our evenings trawling through magazines and websites familiarising ourselves with artists and the industry in general. We'd be calling each other up at 3am saying, 'have you seen this guy's artwork'. To be fair we still do. It keeps us in touch with what other

**POPPY POWELL -
GLOUCESTER**

I started working as an apprentice for No Regrets a year ago, just after finishing my A-levels. I've come far in the past year, though I'd be delusional to believe I knew even 1% of what there is to know. Luckily I have a strong thirst for knowledge and a huge drive. The team I work with are dedicated and are more than happy to share ideas and techniques. I have James Cass to thank for staying behind every evening, more than often until early hours of the morning, keeping a close eye. It is hard work and extremely long hours but I wouldn't have it any other way. I work in a fantastic shop with fantastic people; the atmosphere is always upbeat and friendly. I'm constantly learning and improving and that's something I hope will never change. I'm so lucky to have been offered this opportunity at such a young age and have a lot to be grateful for. It's very early days and already people have shown interest in my work and it is the most incredible feeling. I aim to constantly improve my quality of work, for them, and to do my studio proud!



JAMES CASS - GLOUCESTER

I started an apprenticeship in the shop two years ago; I was at college but left when I was offered the position. I began tattooing full time in February 2011. It wasn't as traditional as I would have liked, due to such high artist changes but I think we've finally got a great team. I love tattooing and the way I learn something new every day. It's an honour to be asked to tattoo someone and I feel very humble about the whole thing. Although I'm never happy with anything I do, I try to learn from each piece and I hope that my entire career feels like that - I don't want to ever stop learning. I try to learn from everything I do and see - I took up oil and watercolour painting and I watch realism artists at work in the hope of learning more about colour theories and techniques. By doing this, I hope to convert them into something that will eventually be my style of working. I take most of my influence from photos and really traditional flash.

**JAMES CASS**

guys are doing, and in a lot of cases, it inspires us and gives new expectations and goals. From the start we understood quality of work was paramount. We'd spend nights awake wondering how to improve - we're both quite competitive characters anyway. We tend to thrive under pressure and we're at our best when we feel we've got ground to make up. It doesn't sit well with us being left behind and the only way to

make sure that never happens is to keep moving and progressing."

With a bold idea in place, plenty of business credentials behind them, and a drive that equalled the first Americans moving out west, now all they had to do was get tattoo artists interested in their venture.

"We pumped the idea to the artists by basically being totally honest really. We couldn't add value artistically, but we knew we could

in other areas. I guess they were encouraged by our enthusiasm and the concept of only having to worry about their artwork. As most will agree, a busy tattooist works ridiculous hours; drawing, tattooing, researching. In reality it leaves little time for the extra bits. That is where we saw our role. In terms of making the best of every working day, it's a full-time job in itself, especially in the early stages. I mean word of mouth is a powerful marketing vehicle and we're aware an artist's work speaks for itself, but a bit of extra promotion and focus on the brand can only be beneficial to the studio, right?

"Throughout this learning curve we've made mistakes, but that's how we've grown. We've still got a shit-load to learn, so keep an eye out for plenty more mistakes! We've had artists come and go and it's because of that we've learned exactly the type of person we want to work with. We've had the egos and the rock 'n' roll thing, and it didn't sit well for us. Saying that, we've learned something from every person we've worked with, good or bad. We like to keep our heads down and keep it humble.

"We were always set on being a custom studio, producing one-off artwork. It's proved a difficult concept for some to grasp, still wanting to point at the wall and get a piece of flash. I mean, we have nothing against doing it, we still do from time to time, we all just prefer working the way we do... drawing by appointment. It's nice for the

APART FROM US WANTING QUALITY TATTOOING LEAVING THE STUDIO, ONE OF OUR MAIN AIMS WAS TO PROVIDE A DECENT WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR ARTISTS. NOT JUST IN TERMS OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS BUT THEIR WORKING LIFE IN GENERAL.



**JEN STERRY -
CHELTENHAM**

The tattoo industry has always appealed to me because every day is different to the one before, it is creative and I love the idea that there is always room for you to improve. Plus the standard of work nowadays is incredible and I can't help but be inspired. I started my apprenticeship with No Regrets in July 2009, immediately after finishing my degree studying Fine Art Painting at Bath Spa University. My knowledge at the beginning was fairly limited but I loved the work of people like Nick Baxter, Jeff Gogue and Buena Vista. Then being in the studio, I soon learnt about more obscure and amazing artists which only pushes me to want to learn more. I've been working professionally since January 2011 and it has its trials but I love it. Most of the work I've focused on so far has been colour work and after painting for so long, the process just seems more natural to me. Saying that, I still have no idea what style I want to really focus on, so I'm still experimenting.



client to get something unique and work with the artist to achieve the desired result. It's not just the art, it's the whole experience. The client becomes a part of the design process, a part of producing their own tattoo. I think that's nice for both parties, I know that's how I like to get tattooed. I think the coverage the industry's received in recent years has made people (some!) realise if you shop around, you can find something really special. We

never intended to be stereotypical, in fact we consciously moved away from it. I guess we felt studios of old could be quite an intimidating place, especially for the younger 'new-starters'. We wanted to create an environment where an 18-year-old wanting their first tattoo would feel as comfortable as your hardcore collector. We're a fairly young team; you're ancient by 30 at No Regrets! It's worked well for us though, everyone's as fresh faced and hungry

WE'D BE CALLING EACH OTHER UP AT 3AM SAYING, 'HAVE YOU SEEN THIS GUY'S ARTWORK'. TO BE FAIR WE STILL DO IT KEEPS US IN TOUCH WITH WHAT OTHER GUYS ARE DOING AND IN A LOT OF CASES IT INSPIRES US AND GIVES NEW EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS.



to further themselves as the next."

A simple plan of attack from the boys and it wasn't long before they were headhunting the best artists they could lay their hands on – still with the ethos of a quality tattoo studio keeping them focused.

"You can make a business pumping out shit and running a tattoo production line, but you can't ever be proud of that stuff... well we couldn't anyway. The real value of the business was always going to be in the artists and the service we could provide them. So the first step was finding artists of a decent calibre to come and work at such a new venture. In fairness the guys could have found a place at a much more established studio; it's always been reliant on the artists trusting us and sharing the vision. I guess we believed that if you applied yourself to something that you love and have an interest in, you not only enjoy work but you will be able to get passionate about it on a daily basis.

"We made good progress in that first year and in 2009 we started attending conventions. It was cool to see other studios really pushing and producing nice work. It definitely made everyone hungry to progress. During this time Meehow joined us. When we saw his work, he blew us away with the quality of his black and grey, especially the depth of his portraiture.

"Things start to grow naturally, each artist has their own clientele and it builds from there. In a lot of cases people get pretty loyal to their artist, they build a certain relationship and understanding. The client comes to trust them and in many cases wouldn't have anyone else tattoo them.

"As the work naturally grew, in late 2009 we expanded to No Regrets Gloucester, where we took on Sass Obuhov and Phatt German in the 12 months that followed.

"It's nice for the likes of Meehow, Phatt and Sass to have so much coverage of their work recently. Considering they haven't been 'out there' too long, the reception has been pretty awesome. All of the guys are heavily critical of their own work which we think is a definite 🍌

LOZ PHILLIPS - GLOUCESTER

I've been with the No Regrets posse for about five minutes now and I feel like I'm stealing the other guys' magazine space here, so sorry! I began tattooing about seven years ago. I did an old school apprenticeship where I got taught properly and practically. I wish I had a list of all the things I learned so I can refer to it still but the thing I mostly remember is, 'If you can't tell what a tattoo is of, from the other side of the street, then it's not a good tattoo'. I still have a lot to learn, I wouldn't say I'm up to a standard that I'm happy with yet. But then again, I wouldn't want to be, I'm always absorbing information from others and biting their ideas, in a good way. The past six months have been a real learning curve for me and I've progressed a lot meeting awesome people. I love tattooing, there's nothing more satisfying than the actual process of putting a tattoo on someone - nothing else matters really. My favourite tattoos to ink feature bold lines and black shading on cheerful people. I like to paint too and my plan is to paint what I want to tattoo, then eventually I can predominantly tattoo what I'd otherwise paint... cunning! I know No Regrets has a great future ahead and will easily become a big thing. As for me... well this industry has gone tits bonkers over the past few years and I'm just gonna try and stay on the roller coaster as long as I can.

**LOZ**

plus. We were chatting with Phatt about the subject a few weeks back and his opinion is, 'if you think your work is amazing and can see no areas to work on or improve, it's time to hang up your machines, your progress is over'.

"The styles of work in the shops vary massively, but the atmosphere is the same - open, with everybody sharing their ideas and working together. It's a nice environment for the younger artists to be in and they definitely take advantage of it."

After a lot of thought, Ben and Alex decided to open up No Regrets Supplies, a bold move and one that was born out of necessity and one simple idea - keep it in-house and things run smoother.

"We started the supply business out of frustration! As a studio, we supply our artists with everything from needles and ink, to all the hygiene products needed to run a studio. As any good studio owner and artist will know, this is not cheap, especially when you are always trying to find the best quality. We found ourselves buying

THINGS START TO GROW NATURALLY, EACH ARTIST HAS THEIR OWN CLIENTELE AND IT BUILDS FROM THERE. IN A LOT OF CASES PEOPLE GET PRETTY LOYAL TO THEIR ARTIST. THEY BUILD A CERTAIN RELATIONSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING.

needles from Germany, inks from the US, as well as other products from all over the globe. We started to buy in bulk and it developed from there really.

"The supplies are run from the Cheltenham shop. We've got a little office out the back; it just made sense to keep everything nice and close. We've also got some warehouse space so that the orders are just sent over and dispatched. At the moment we're planning a full refit of both the shops, with the key focus being hygiene. It's finding that balance between being functional and aesthetically pleasing, but function has to come first."

So with the studios busy, the artists working hard to establish themselves and their reputation growing, what is it that Ben and Alex do?

"The workload of two studios did become pretty daunting, but we struggled through. Without a doubt the hardest part to nail was achieving the right balance of artists with the right attitudes. Thankfully we've landed on our feet. The guys have been great, all of them are focused on what they're doing and their careers. I mean we're going to slow down on the convention circuit this year, we want to concentrate on the clients we already have. We'll still be around at some of our favourites, just not as much as previous years.

**MARCUS HILL****MARCUS HILL - CHELTENHAM**

I started at No Regrets early in 2009 and have watched it grow from a small local tattoo shop, to a nationally recognised, award winning studio. Apart from the two owners, Ben and Alex, I am currently the longest serving member of the team and sometimes I find it hard to believe how far this place has come in such a short period of time.

My background is rooted in animation and cartoons and I was also very interested in surrealist painting and graffiti art at school. I think that all these things come through in my designs in one way or another. Although I try to get a lot of my design inspiration from outside of tattooing, there are still countless tattooists around today that I find immensely inspiring. As a result, who I consider my favourite artist changes about as often as my underwear - maybe three favourite artists a month is a bit excessive but still... My main ambition is to improve on what I did yesterday and when that stops, then maybe it's time to give up... but until then...

MEEHOW KOTARSKI - CHELTENHAM

I have been tattooing for over ten years now, two of them with No Regrets. From the start I enjoyed working with black and grey and more recently with realism. I like the challenge of working to such strict parameters - if it's out it's out! Saying that I do enjoy working with colour and developing other areas of my tattooing, it's one of the reasons I love the UK so much. Coming from Poland, where the industry is still very much frowned upon and it was damn hard to find studio work, this has been a bonus for me. Unfortunately, I did not have the privilege of learning in a professional environment - it is definitely a disadvantage having to learn from every mistake, with little to no guidance. The UK is a dream with its more open attitude and the diverse client base. It has really allowed me to spread my wings artistically and develop other areas of my work. I am going to be working on some colour realism stuff in the near future as it seems like a natural shift to make. I am crazy about the details and little touches realistic work demands, they can really make a piece and bring it alive.

**MEEHOW****MARK BASSETT - CHELTENHAM (APPRENTICE)**

At thirty-years-old, I sometimes ask myself why I didn't think of becoming a tattooist earlier. I suppose it's mainly because I grew up in a small town of uninspiring artists, putting out work that looked like a plate of melted Smarties. After drawing a design for a friend at the end of '09 and being excited about him getting it inked, I subsequently looked into tattooing and was blown away by the artists I found. Artists like Bez, Portugal, Gogue and Vargas. I put together a portfolio full of twists on traditional tattoo subjects and nine months later I was exceptionally fortunate to land an apprenticeship at No Regrets. My apprenticeship has been both informative and fun and I've put a lot of work in to prove my dedication but the journey so far has been as rough as a brick having a spin in a tumble dryer. I've just started torturing grapefruits with small designs and am constantly drawing to improve my composition and line-work and to cultivate a style. I'm currently drawn to creating darker leftfield designs, be they old or new school.



working week, what's the point in them being there?

"As time has gone on, our [Ben & Alex] roles have become less and less, and we've passed the baton to the other lads. No more mopping floors! We're still around the studio a lot and we pick up any slack, but the majority of our time is spent on the supply side of things. Although we do still make decisions on stuff like promotions and budgets and still get involved with the little tweaks, the day-to-day stuff is pretty nailed down by the artists.

"The future for us is to keep moving forward I guess; concentrate on what we have, always aim to be better than yesterday. Everybody here are passionate about what they do and the real praise has to go to them, they've produced the work and put the hours in tattooing. Without them there would be no

"We've definitely come up against a fair amount of criticism about the whole 'non-artist' owner argument and we get it, we just don't agree. We are proving to some extent that a balance can be struck. In our

opinion, it's about understanding the value of your team and their strengths. From there it's about adding your bit, adding your value. If someone doesn't bring something to the table, adding value during the

MARK BASSETT

WE'VE DEFINITELY COME UP AGAINST A FAIR AMOUNT OF CRITICISM ABOUT THE WHOLE 'NON-ARTIST' OWNER ARGUMENT AND WE GET IT, WE JUST DON'T AGREE. WE ARE PROVING TO SOME EXTENT THAT A BALANCE CAN BE STRUCK.

studios. With the second generation coming through, James Cass and Jen, our junior artists, and Poppy Powell and Bertie Bassett, our apprentices, we are confident and excited about what's to come. Once you've got the right team together, pushing towards the same goal, we feel you are halfway there. 🐾

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“ I started tattooing by myself, about five years ago in a small town in the east of France. After a few months, I understood I would have to leave that place to evolve. I knew I would learn a lot through travelling and meeting new people, as it's easier to share with people who have the same passion for tattooing.

“I started, as many other artists, in street shops, tattooing all kinds of tattoos to get solid grounds. I asserted myself only later on, when I had the opportunity of working with Jack (Ribeiro) for almost two years. Then I moved to Canada, planning on setting up my own shop, creating tattoos in my own style and working hard of course, but in my own universe. It became a need, in order to be able to focus enough on my projects.”

Photo Translation: Fiona Bergson



THE DARK/BLACK AND GREY STYLE SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING YOU ENJOY EVER SINCE YOUR FIRST TATTOOS - DO YOU THINK YOUR BACKGROUND WITH METAL BANDS DIRECTLY LINKED TO YOUR STYLE?

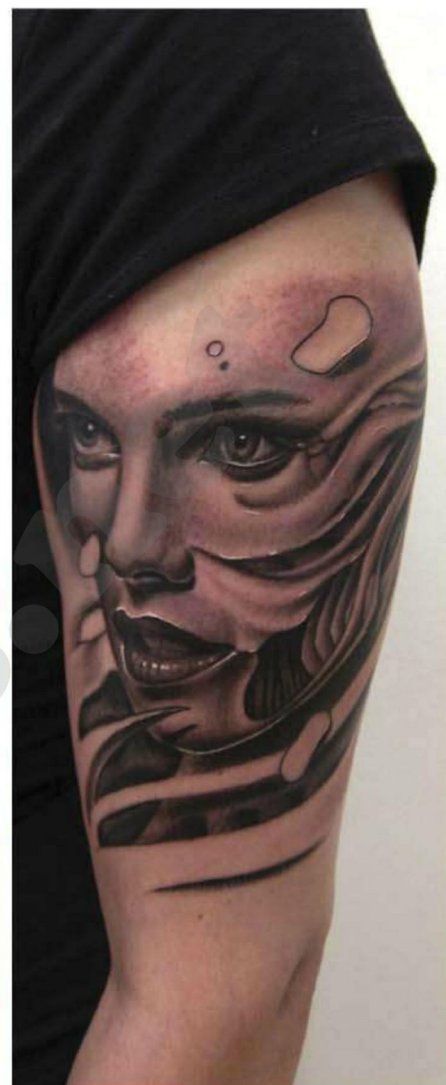
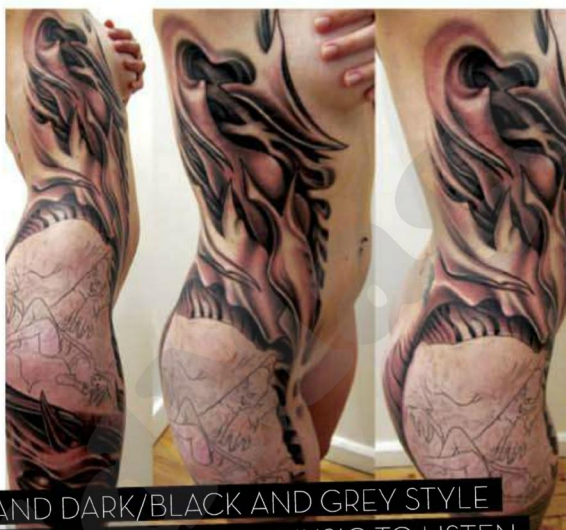
“Since my childhood, I've always listened to metal music. I played in bands for several years, mostly in death metal bands, with, of course, very refined album covers.

So of course it had an influence on me and I naturally turned to the visual aspect of this universe. I think

that metal music and dark/black and grey style always meet at one point. It is the perfect music to listen to, even though others can be good too, when looking at dark works, at least for the mood it puts someone in.

“One can't wake up one day and decide to follow a trend; it has to come naturally and must be authentic. I could almost say that one does not choose a style, but a style chooses someone!

“Music has a deep impact on my work, when I draw or tattoo, it helps



I THINK THAT METAL MUSIC AND DARK/BLACK AND GREY STYLE ALWAYS MEET AT ONE POINT. IT IS THE PERFECT MUSIC TO LISTEN TO, EVEN THOUGH OTHERS CAN BE GOOD TOO. WHEN LOOKING AT DARK WORKS, AT LEAST FOR THE MOOD IT PUTS SOMEONE IN



me to put me in my bubble. A lot of my customers in Montreal are musicians and like metal music too, the scene is incredible here!

"In the end, we have a lot to share, apart from tattoos. But I listen to very different styles of music, not only metal music, it just depends on my mood."

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR TIME WITH JACK RIBEIRO?

"As I said before, I learnt by myself and I can't really say I had 'training' with him, but I can say he changed my vision of tattoos, for sure! Apart from the talent he has and that everybody is aware of, he has real human qualities. I can say that the time I spent with Jack has been beneficial to me and Jack became my mentor."

"It's important for an artist to have a passion for other artists work; it 🌟"



is a way to step back from our own work. The influence of things on our work is directly linked to the capacity of gathering the visual information that has an impact on us throughout our life. Added to a lot of work and personal research, it helps someone get a graphical style

"As far as tattoo is concerned, it is a way of building one's own background. Everything that makes a piece of work recognisable amongst others. And God knows this research work can take years! I have moved forward a lot since I moved to Quebec, I became able to apply all that I learnt in the past. And I have incredible customers who give me a lot of freedom for their projects."

HOW ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD AN INFLUENCE ON YOUR WORK, FROM A HUMAN OR TECHNICAL POINT OF VIEW?

IT'S IMPORTANT FOR AN ARTIST TO HAVE A PASSION FOR OTHER ARTISTS WORK, IT IS A WAY TO STEP BACK FROM OUR OWN WORK

"I think we learn from everybody, from more and less experienced people, from a technical or artistic point of view. Sharing is central in this job, it helps you to move forward quickly. You just have to take a look at how important tattoo artists became and what they brought to the community.

"It was the case and still is; but, from a personal point of view, I can say that meeting Toxyc had a great influence on me. He is different from Jack but incredible too, he never stops tattooing! I learnt a lot from him, in the way that you don't get anything if you don't do anything. But he also is a friend, the one I call when I have doubts. He is full of advice and taught me a lot about drawing. I owe him a lot."

IN THE END, BETWEEN JACK AND TOXYC, YOU MUST FEEL LIKE A SPOILED CHILD - IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE THOUGH...

"Of course it could have been worse! But as I said, I think nothing comes without work, even if you are surrounded with the best tattoo artists, it doesn't mean you will be one too.

"If they got there, it's thanks to their talent and hard work. It could be discouraging because their standards are high. I find it motivating to see what they do, how they do it, everything comes from there. From the moment you do things naturally and sincerely, that you remain humble to it and do your thing because you love it, then you have pleasure in doing it. If, on top of that, people like what you do and follow you, it's amazing. It's this daily motivation that makes one move forward."

WHAT IS YOUR 'MAGIC BULLET' TO CREATE A GOOD TATTOO?

"As we all grow up constantly, it's not easy to say, but I like spontaneity in tattoos.

"It's really important to me and it's the way I work, my current ideal. But there must be a reflection on the place to tattoo the drawing.

"Now I've grown up, I realise that I like tattooing simple things, adapted to the body shape and that will instantly be enhanced by the place it is tattooed. The bigger the tattoo is, the more details I can add. I think it also ages





THE INFLUENCE OF THINGS ON OUR WORK IS DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE CAPACITY OF GATHERING THE VISUAL INFORMATION THAT HAS AN IMPACT ON US THROUGHOUT OUR LIFE

better this way. Everything works well for me, but this doesn't mean I don't want to work differently sometimes and enjoy tattooing smaller things."

IN ONLY A YEAR AND A HALF IN CANADA, IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY. TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FRANCE AND CANADA WITH REGARDS TO THE TATTOO INDUSTRY AND THE RELATIONSHIP YOUR CUSTOMERS HAVE WITH TATTOOS - I GUESS THERE ARE 'MENTALITY DIFFERENCES' BETWEEN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA?

"We feel that North American society is young, in their mentality and all the rest, in the good sense! I think it is an

important reason why tattoo is so successful here. I feel it everyday, and through my customers too.

"They are not afraid of getting a

big tattoo, leaving me almost totally free to draw it.

"As far as the dark style is concerned, we can totally feel the influence of American artists on Canadian tattoo artists. In their artistic approach as well as their techniques."

YOU'RE SO BUSY, IS THERE EVER ANY DOWNTIME - AND WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT?

"I try to do a lot of sports when I have some free time. It helps me clear my mind but also keep in shape, physically and mentally, because when you tattoo, you need to!

"I also enjoy cinema a lot, I can 🍿"



watch three movies in a row. I also like video games, maybe less than movies though – they take too much time.

"I would like to start playing music again some day, I am surrounded with great musicians, but, I guess we can't do everything we want, but some day I will, for sure."

WHAT DOES THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE HOLD IN STORE? COME TO THAT, WHAT DOES THE LONG-TERM FUTURE LOOK LIKE? ARE YOU ABLE TO PLAN THAT FAR AHEAD?

"I see myself working hard to draw and I'm soon going to attend a private art school based on realism – once a week for a few months. It will do me some good and allow me to spend some time with artists who are not from the tattoo industry; it will also help me improve my graphical style.

"Other than that, tattoo conventions of course! I will take part in a few this year; New York, Miami, Las Vegas, Toronto and Montreal. And maybe some more in Europe. I can only project myself one year forward.



SHARING IS CENTRAL IN THIS JOB, IT HELPS YOU TO MOVE FORWARD QUICKLY. YOU JUST HAVE TO TAKE A LOOK AT HOW IMPORTANT TATTOO ARTISTS BECAME AND WHAT THEY BROUGHT TO THE COMMUNITY

Nobody knows what the future holds for us, but I try and anticipate a bit.

"There are so many things going on in this industry that it becomes hard to plan something."

WHAT WAS YOUR FEELING OF MONTREAL'S TATTOO CONVENTION THIS YEAR?

"All of us representatives of dark style – we were together at the same place and we spent an amazing weekend there. Art Tattoo Montreal is an incredible convention and it's getting better as time goes by thanks to the work Pierre, Valérie and Pascal do. The place is really nice and the mood is good; relaxing and very Montreal-like in the end. The level is good and there are a lot of artists, even if old school/new school tend to be the dominant styles. It goes with the general tendency of tattoos in the world, and it doesn't leave me a lot of room to do some dark projects."



ANY LAST WORDS?

"I would like to thank my wife, most of all, without whom nothing would be possible. She is the one who takes care of everything in the shop, and she's doing a wonderful job. God knows it's a lot of work between public relations, the team, the communication, organisation for conventions... and also my friends Jack, Toxyc and R.T.C, who have always been here for me.

"And if anybody is interested. we are still looking for a fourth artist to work permanently with us!" 🐾



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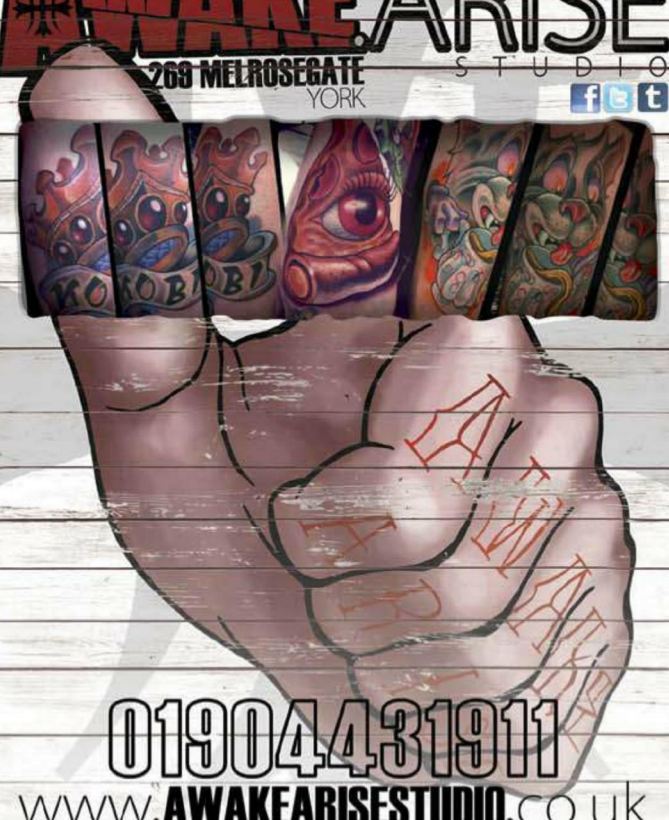


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PAPERBACK WRITERS

There's a curious snowball effect happening with the coverage of tattoos and tattooing in the wider media at the moment. Several articles have appeared in recent months examining various aspects of tattooing, all using the hoary old cliché 'of course, tattoos are no longer the exclusive preserve of bikers, gangs, murderers and psychotic incestuous hillbillies'...

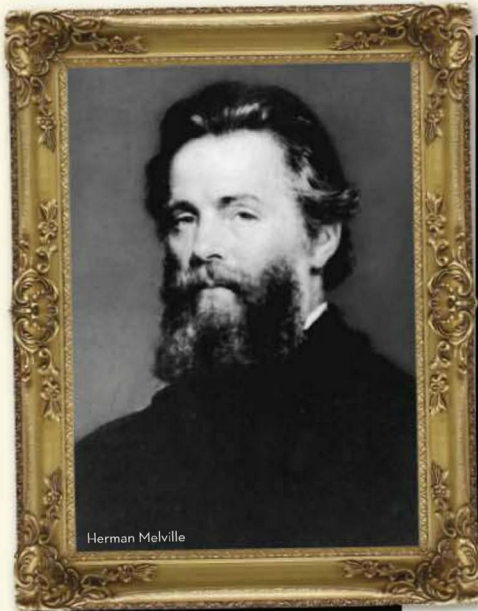
While this is a happy opportunity for the entire tattoo

community to slap its collective palm to its face, it's dispiriting reading and it seems to be multiplying. So instead, we present a few alternative tomes and treasures where tattoos, tattoo artists and body art in general receive slightly more imaginative treatments. Hopefully they'll act as a reminder that tattoos have never been the exclusive preserve of anyone at all – and that writers throughout history have recognised this. Enjoy, and don't forget to share your suggestions with us...

Herman Melville: *Moby Dick*

More than any of his contemporaries, Melville (1819-91) was well placed to





write about tattoos in his fiction. A sometime sailor on whaling ships, he deserted his vessel in 1842 in the Marquesas and lived amongst the tribes there for a month – his experiences later informed early novels ‘Typee’ and ‘Omoo’, both of which contain accounts of the tribal tattooing practices he witnessed.

But it's really ‘Moby Dick’ (1851) where tattoos crop up, not just as a cultural observation, but as a means to ask questions about identity. The novel is both thrilling and frustratingly dense, packed with gory scenes of hunting, brawling and battling on the high seas, running alongside religious polemics and a lengthy investigation of types of whale (in case you need to know your fin back from your sulphur bottom). The tattooed character in question is Queequeg, a harpooner sharing Captain Ahab's demented chase around the oceans; initially his markings are simply described as ‘squares’, but as he gets to know the narrator, Ishmael, the full story is revealed. The tattoos are ‘the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume.’

The twist being that Queequeg himself cannot decipher the marks he carries, even though ‘his own

THE TATTOOED CHARACTER IN QUESTION IS QUEEQUEG, A HARPOONER SHARING CAPTAIN AHAB'S DEMENTED CHASE AROUND THE OCEANS; INITIALLY HIS MARKINGS ARE SIMPLY DESCRIBED AS ‘SQUARES’, BUT AS HE GETS TO KNOW THE NARRATOR, ISHMAEL, THE FULL STORY IS REVEALED

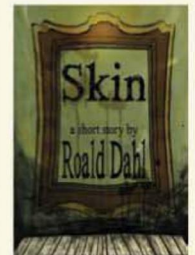


heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and to be unsolved to the last.’ Queequeg will die with no understanding of the appearance he turned outwards towards the world, bearing a story that though visible, can't be told. Is it a wider comment on the human condition? A criticism of the prevailing attitude in 19th century towards those of colour? Who knows? One thing it

definitely isn't is a criticism of the body art itself – ‘It's only his outside,’ confesses Ishmael, ‘a man can be honest in any sort of skin.’ Like much of ‘Moby Dick’, Melville leaves plenty open to interpretation, which is probably why the novel continues to challenge and intrigue to this day.

Ray Bradbury: The Illustrated Man

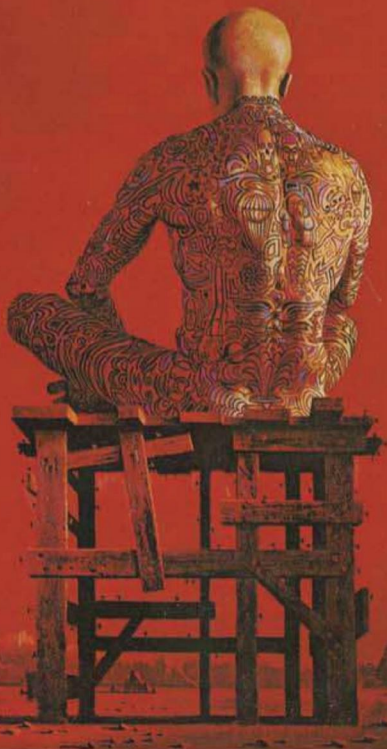
In the framing story for ‘The Illustrated Man’, a 1951 collection of short science fiction tales, our



SKIN, VERSION ONE: ROALD DAHL

In between spinning charmingly grisly yarns of giants, twits, witches and giant peaches, Roald Dahl spun a nasty little tale of the unexpected with a full backpiece at its core. Tattoo artist, Drioli, consents to having a portrait of his wife created on his back by an artist friend. Some years later, his life in ruins, Drioli passes a gallery exhibiting some of the artist's work and goes in, eventually revealing his own unique piece of art to the crowd inside, and is made some astonishing offers that change his life forever. It's an entertaining little shocker, but tattoo artists out there may be vexed by Dahl's dismissal of their craft: ‘I will teach you to use the tattoo [sic]. It is easy. A child could do it,’ says Drioli. ‘I will undertake to teach you in two minutes.’

RAY BRADBURY THE ILLUSTRATED MAN



covers his whole torso. When he eventually relents, he's revealed as tattooed (or 'illustrated') from the neck downwards, 'a riot of rockets and fountains and people, in such intricate detail and colour that you could hear the voices murmuring small and muted, from the crowds that inhabited his body. [...] You found them in forests of hair, lurking among a constellation of freckles, or peering from armpit caverns, diamond eyes aglitter. Each seemed intent upon his own activity; each was a separate gallery portrait.'

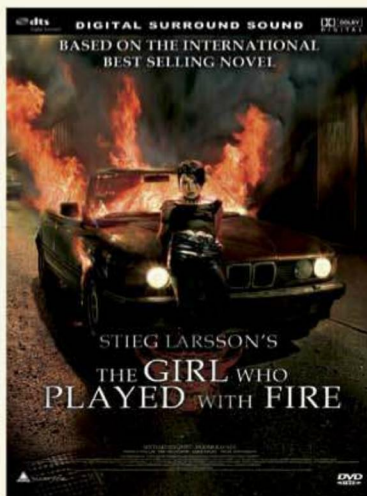
Anyone who's ever been asked "what does that tattoo mean?" could take some great inspiration from the Illustrated Man (and the short story of the same name within the collection), whose tattoos are revealed as individual stories that

come to life on his skin before the narrator's eyes, yarning about rocket men falling to earth (and inspiring Elton John along the way – fact!), apocalyptic events on Mars and – most interestingly to the inked reader – warning prophetically of events to come in the life of the tattooed man. They muse on pride, misplaced faith, love and fate, but the Illustrated Man himself is a warning about the seductive lure of storytelling (our narrator is warned not to look at the tattoos, but can't resist them and sees a depiction of his own death), and the danger of learning things ahead of time.

For those with ink, it also raises an issue that Bradbury probably never intended, writing as he was at a point where a significantly smaller proportion of the population was heavily tattooed. The doomed protagonist of 'The Illustrated Man' short story, inked by a witch with her eyes sewn shut (you've got to think he was asking for it, really), discovers that he has his fate marked out in his own tattoos – which could give us pause to think about how the way we choose to adorn ourselves might affect our future. Do we truly live differently because we get that memorial tattoo to remember a loved one, for example? Will the stories we tell through our own collections affect those experiencing them, as they do Bradbury's narrator? The Illustrated

THEY MUSE ON PRIDE, MISPLACED FAITH, LOVE AND FATE, BUT THE ILLUSTRATED MAN HIMSELF IS A WARNING ABOUT THE SEDUCTIVE LURE OF STORYTELLING

nameless narrator meets a stranger in the woods who even in the ferocious heat of the day refuses to remove the heavy shirt that



FOR LARSSON, WHO WAS A COMMITTED ADVOCATE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS, THE SKINNY GIRL WITH THE TATTOOS BECOMES THE MIRROR TO HOLD UP AGAINST SWEDISH SOCIETY, TO MAKE IT CONFRONT ITS DARKNESSES, PREJUDICES AND FAILINGS

Man may have started off as a simple narrative device, but as the future has arrived, he's evolved into something more. But remember: if you think your tattoos are moving and telling you stories, you've had enough and it's time for bed.

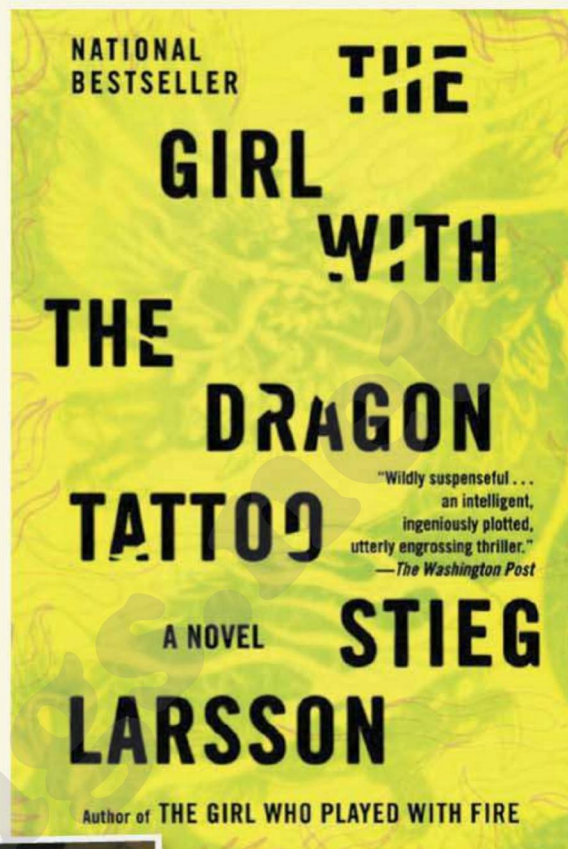
Stieg Larsson: Millennium Trilogy

The use of body art in Stieg Larsson's world-beating Millennium trilogy may be sparse, but it makes quite an impact. Among Lisbeth Salander's collection (of nine) is an armband and the dragon tattoo that gives the first book in the trilogy its English title – 'The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo' – but Larsson spends little time pondering their meanings.

He creates a solid back-story for just two: a wasp, which is also her hacker pseudonym; and an ankle tattoo, which she gets to remind her of a particularly savage event in her life.

The rest of her tattoos and piercings are left vaguely defined, which keeps Salander one step removed from the reader and also paradoxically

makes her seem more real – since many people have tattoos for specific reasons, many for no reason at all. But another intriguing function (aside from creating a heroine who remains baffling to the last) is to play on the reaction of society to tattoos, and those who have them. Some characters see her ink as simply her choice; some don't really see it at all; some think it's sexy; and some use it to designate her as a sociopath, a freak and a borderline lunatic. The point being that she may be all of those things, but that the tattoos have nothing to do with it. For Larsson, who was a committed advocate of women's rights, the skinny girl with the tattoos becomes the



villain of this picaresque tale of romance and roguery, which is the only one on our list to look closely at the people and processes involved in inkwork, crafting the entire story around them. It details the life of Cy Parks as he grows

SKIN, VERSION TWO: SHELLEY JACKSON
Brooklyn-based writer Jackson's 'Skin' project is designed to create an unusual short story.

It's told across the skin of participants, or 'Words', all of whom have volunteered to have one word (plus any relevant punctuation) tattooed onto them. It has to be in a classic book font, be unadorned, and be exactly as specified by Jackson. Once the word is inked, the Words send pics of the finished artwork to her, to be compiled.

Ultimately no-one will know the finished version of the story except Jackson herself, but it will be out there, wandering around etched into the skin of her volunteers from all over the world and unsolved to the last, just like the tattoos on Melville's Queequeg.

Find out more from ineradicablestain.com, and look out for an interview with the artist herself in a forthcoming issue of Skin Deep!



mirror to hold up against Swedish society, to make it confront its darkneses, prejudices and failings. There's a further tattoo sub-plot wherein Salander uses a tattoo machine to mete out bloody vengeance, but rather than spoil the shock for those who haven't delved into the wonders of this trilogy, let's just say that a very bad man indeed gets what he deserves under the needle. Definitely not one to try at home, kids.

Sarah Hall: The Electric Michelangelo

Tattooing is both the hero and

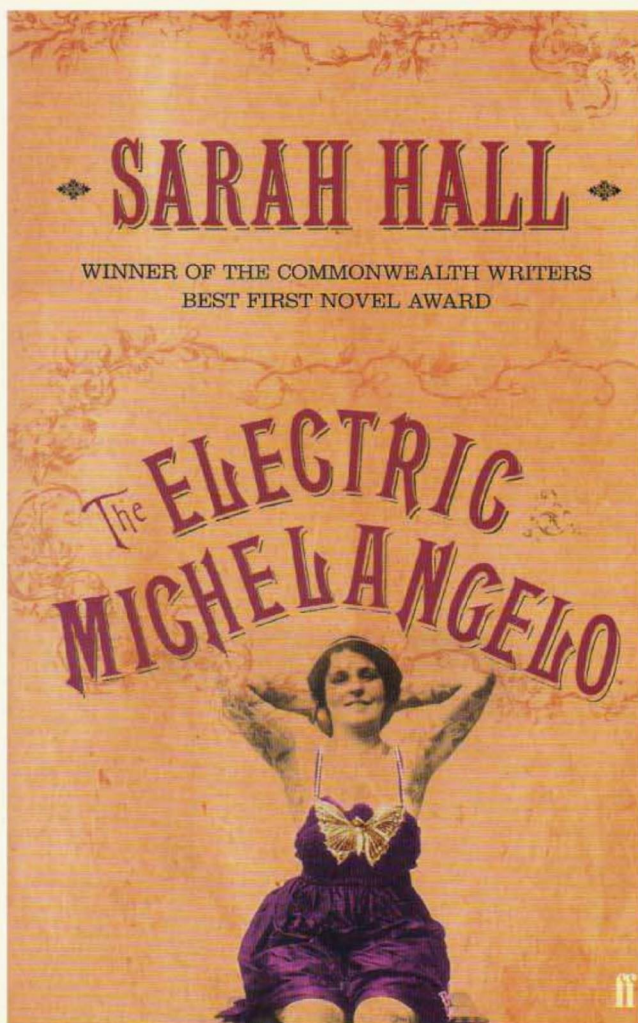
up in shabby post-war Morecambe Bay. He's accidentally apprenticed to a spectacularly curmudgeonly tattoo artist, makes his way to America, finds his way as a tattooist in Coney Island and navigates a strange world of circus freaks, gangsters and, oddly, a horse who lives in the downstairs apartment.

Hall's gift as a writer is to conjure the sensations of tattooing from a bygone age, and she's clearly done her research – those wanting a decent overview of ink in Europe and the States in the past hundred years will get their itch thoroughly scratched. Her descriptions of

WHETHER YOU AGREE OR NOT, IT'S A BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN INVESTIGATION INTO THE WORLD OF TATTOOING, AND THERE'S A LOT HERE THAT WILL RAISE A WRY SMILE AND A 'YUP, MET THAT PERSON'

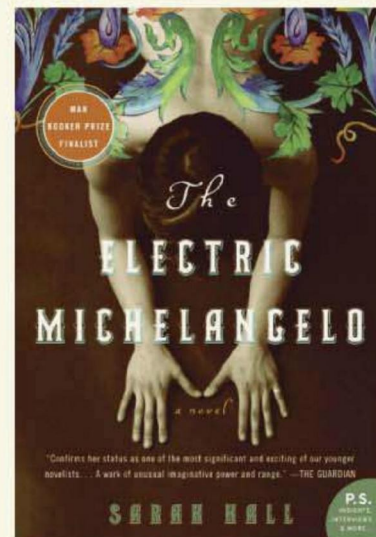
the flash, the freezing seaside studio, making up needles and drawing designs are supremely evocative, as are her portraits of the people who come to be inked and the reasons they do it.

But she's best at investigating the areas where there are no answers, and that makes for an engaging read in amongst the bar fights, corporeal woes and occasional grimness of her tale. 'It was impossible to pin down the exact beauty and appeal of their profession, butterfly-captured and gorgeously open for all to see,' thinks Cy at one point. 'You couldn't find the marrow or the quick of it to suck



out, or set a flame to the wick of it and illuminate a room. Tattooing was like being called by a siren song, or the music of the spheres, impossible to resist, impossible to explain.'

Whether you agree or not, it's a beautifully written investigation into the world of tattooing, and there's a lot here that will raise a wry smile and a 'yup, met that person'. And as she deftly illustrates the whole spread of society receiving tattoos, from drunken louts on coach trips to genteel passengers on a transatlantic cruise liner; it's the perfect antidote to the strange alternative history being peddled in the papers. 🐼



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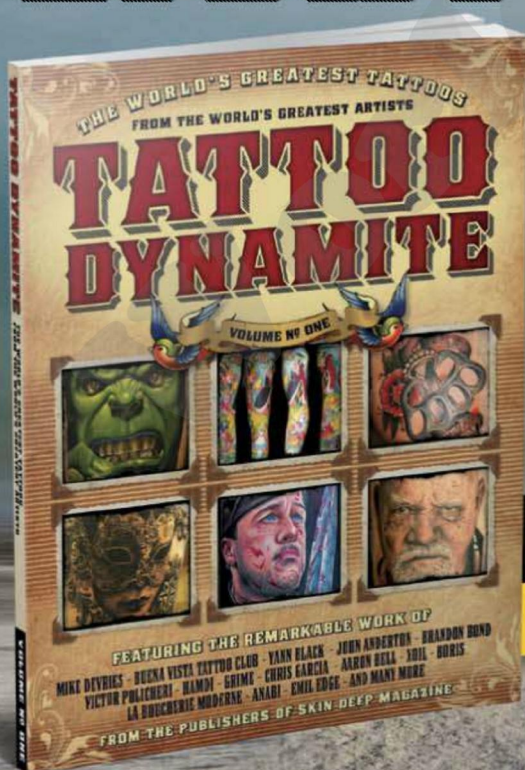
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SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

Osa Wahn considers herself an artist, not a tattooist. Owing her life's calling to her father, Osa started tattooing at the age of 12, and she won her first award at Shockin' City Tattoo convention the following year when she was only 13 years old

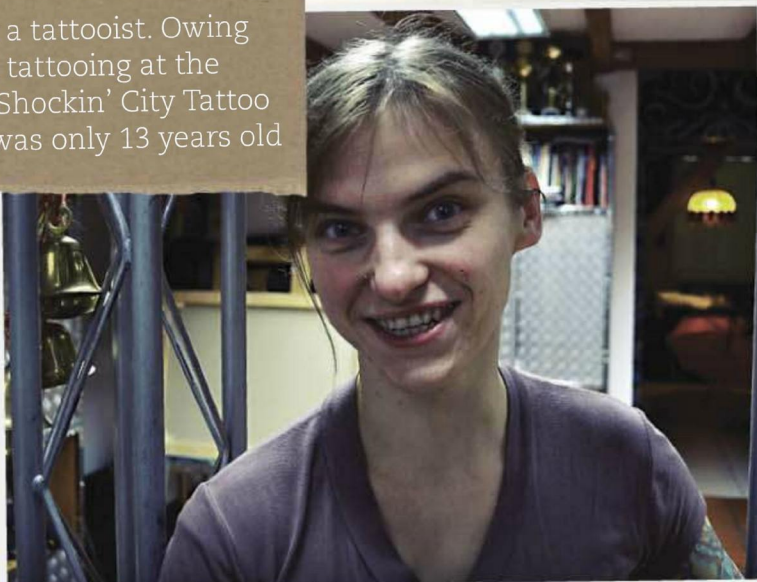


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On a rainy and freezing cold autumn day, I step inside Shockin' City Tattoo, in what seems to be a more bohemian and culturally diverse area of Vienna, than the fancy, high-culture centre of town I just left, and for which the city is renowned. As you should when you stumble upon tattoo studios, I guess.

Gone are the monumental old buildings, the Opera, the many theatres, galleries and The Spanish Riding School. Present are the Indian restaurants and the dive bars. The owner of Shockin' City, however, doesn't really seem to fit in anywhere in these fundamentally opposing worlds, even though Osa Wahn is probably a product of both.

"I'm not a tattooist. I don't really have anything in common with the tattoo scene. I don't know many



tattoo artists and I think most of them are too primitive for me. The ones I spend time with, I consider to be artists. I like the exchange of ideas we have; it's constructive. Tattooing on the other hand is a craftsmanship. They call themselves artists, but really they're not. It's not art if you copy from stencils," she explains.

In other words, if you want a tattoo from Osa Wahn you need to trust her completely. Either you have a theme she enjoys or you let her altogether decide what to do. And bear in mind, she rejects about 80 percent of the suggestions she gets.

"People who want typical tattoos want them from typical tattooists



WHEN I WAS 13 I WENT TO MY FIRST CONVENTION, IN BERLIN. I GOT MY FIRST AWARD THERE AS WELL



and I'm not interested in doing Chinese letters or symbols. The things that interest me are not done on stencil. I can't say that I have customers. They're canvases and the 'canvas' gives me free hands. It lets me do what I want."

Osa Wahn started tattooing when she was 12 years old. The reason for

that was her father, Waldemar Wahn, a well-known name on the Austrian scene. "I started helping out in studios when I was a kid and started tattooing at the age of 12. When I was 13 I went to my first convention, in Berlin. I got my first award there as well."

From then on she combined school with tattooing: "It was child labour,"

she says with a smile. "I went to school in the morning and tattooed in the afternoon. I didn't really care what my friends thought. I actually didn't have many friends. I was living in my own world; the teachers were alright with it since I did pretty well in school. Some of them didn't even know, I think." 🌸

Being that young she was bound to get some attention, but it was nothing she couldn't handle.

"I probably got some and in one way it wasn't easy, since some people have problems with female tattooists. On the other hand it got people interested in my art, not who I was or how I looked."

Waldemar himself doesn't really tattoo anymore. He wound down a couple of years ago and is now just doing the occasional tattoo for friends. But his legacy lives on through his now 31-year-old daughter, whose style is remarkably similar to that of her Dad.

"We worked together, exchanging ideas for many years," Osa says. "If we hadn't done that, our styles



THE MORE ARTISTS WORK TOGETHER,
THE FASTER THEY EVOLVE. I'VE GONE A
LONG WAY TO WHERE I AM RIGHT NOW



wouldn't have evolved so fast. I can't understand artists who won't reveal their secrets of the trade and teach new tattooists. The more artists work together, the faster they evolve. I've gone a long way to where I am right now. If you saw some older tattoos by us you'd see there wasn't much similarity with what I do today."

And what she does is basically abstract paintings on skin, often inspired by nature. "I like abstract

things that can also be done as a picture and I like landscapes. I really enjoy tattooing trees in landscapes and animals, and I also do plant motifs.

"A common place to get a tattoo is the upper arm and its form is perfect for faces. That's probably why. Also you can express a lot more with a face than, for instance, a flower."

She does not, however, actually paint as often as she used to.





"I like to experiment with painting. It's a great way of developing your style and try out new ideas, but I don't have the time anymore. I did some new paintings for an exhibition

in the beginning of 2011, but nothing since that."

In the meantime, we'll just have to satiate ourselves with what she does do regularly. 🐼

A COMMON PLACE TO GET A TATTOO IS THE UPPER ARM AND ITS FORM IS PERFECT FOR FACES. THAT'S PROBABLY WHY. ALSO YOU CAN EXPRESS A LOT MORE WITH A FACE THAN, FOR INSTANCE, A FLOWER.



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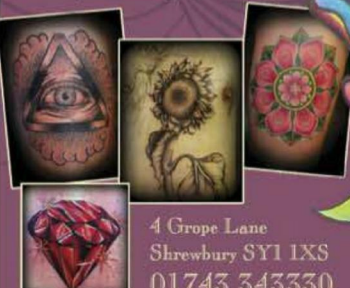
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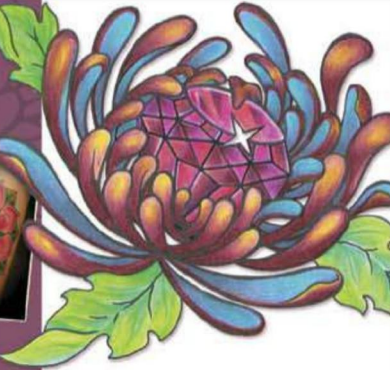
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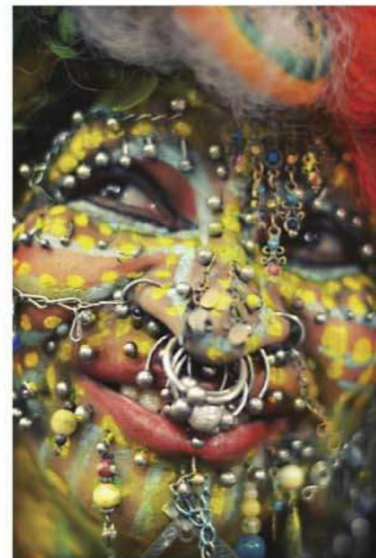
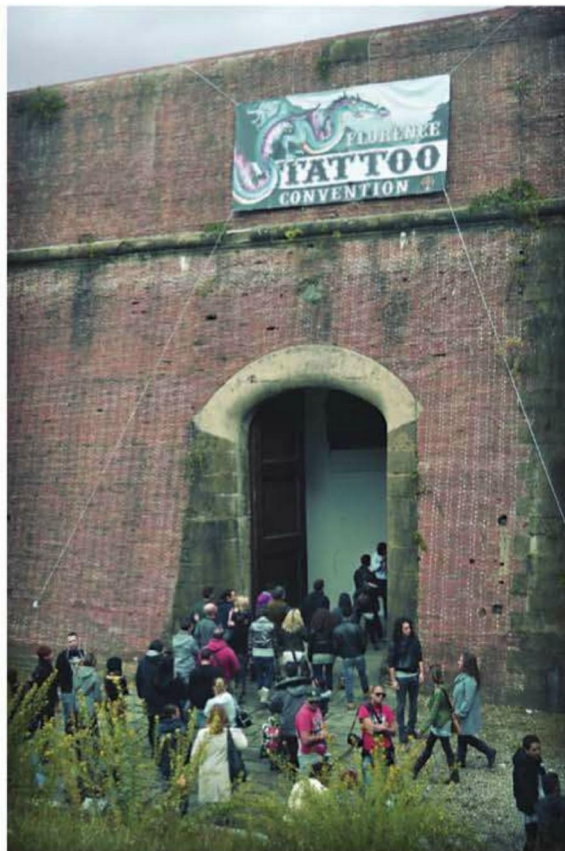
FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE

The past was in focus as the forth Florence Tattoo Convention got underway inside an old fortress in a city oozing with history. Skin stitching and hand tapping might have been the lesser used techniques on display, but they certainly captured the attention

When I ask Silvia Bongianni, the press contact at this year's Florence Tattoo Convention, which of the attending artists she's the most happy to have at the convention, she starts off by naming three names, all within the category of traditional tattooing. It turns out that the focus of the forth convention in this historic city, conveniently enough, is on tattooing of the past; the first name she mentions is Colin Dale of Skin & Bone in Copenhagen.

"He does Scandinavian tribals, a lot of them done with a special Inuit technique using a needle and thread. The designs are simple, but very important since they are linked to traditional stories. They are not only for decoration," she says.

The idea of making traditional tattooing the focus of the convention came about after last year's show when a couple of the organisers met up with Lars Krutak (who is probably better known as the Tattoo Hunter on the Discovery Channel) at a



when I was here last year they had a presentation of Ötzi, the iceman, who was believed to have had medicinal tattoos. This year is the 20th anniversary of finding him and 5,300 years later there are still tribal people doing the same thing. For me this is educational and about paying homage to the people who invented tattooing, without whom we wouldn't be here today."

On his travels around the world, Lars Krutak lets just about anyone perform their local technique on his body, this show not being an exception. For the second time he lets Colin Dale sew a tattoo onto his body.

"He's basically the only one doing it, at least the only one skilful enough for me to let him do it on me. It's by far the most painful technique and I can see why more people aren't interested. Skin stitching takes a long time to do on just a small space."

The technique has never been performed in Italy before and if you take look at Colin Dale's upbringing it

THIS YEAR IS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF FINDING HIM (ÖTZI) AND 5,300 YEARS LATER THERE ARE STILL TRIBAL PEOPLE DOING THE SAME THING. FOR ME THIS IS EDUCATIONAL AND ABOUT PAYING HOMAGE TO THE PEOPLE WHO INVENTED TATTOOING, AND WITHOUT WHOM WE WOULDN'T BE HERE TODAY

convention in Borneo.

"They connected with some traditional tattooists there and invited them to the show," he explains.

"Last year the convention was a lot smaller, but now there are 300 artists here, and the organisers are big fans of traditional tattooing. They're interested in the roots and there's a

large tribal interest in Italy."

Besides selling his many books and promoting his TV show, the Tattoo Hunter himself is doing two seminars at the show, one on medicinal tattooing and one on scarification among different African tribes.

"I chose these topics because you rarely hear about them. Also,

THE ART OF FLORENCE (1)

Florence has a legendary artistic heritage. Cimabue and Giotto, the fathers of Italian painting, lived in Florence; as well as Arnolfo and Andrea Pisano, renewers of architecture and sculpture; Brunelleschi, Donatello and Masaccio, forefathers of the Renaissance; Ghiberti and the Della Robbias, Filippo Lippi and Angelico; Botticelli, Paolo Uccello and the universal genius of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.



Jose Gonzalez Exclusive Ink, Salinas, USA



Federico Constantini Tatta Tutto, Pomezia, Italy



Andrea Lanzi
Antikorpo, Brescia, Italy



Michelangelo
V Tattoo, Valencia, Spain



Winner 2nd place Best Black & Grey
Michelangelo V Tattoo, Valencia, Spain



Mike Davies, Everlasting Tattoo, San Francisco, USA



Mike Davies Everlasting Tattoo, San Francisco, USA



Shorty Buntmaches Tattoo, Berlin, Germany



Yang Easy Tattoo, Taiwan



Winner 1st place Best Tribal
Marco Galdo Trafficanti d'Arte, Milano, Italy



Emilia Lindberg
Custom Illusion, Gävle, Sweden



Tiziano Ripanti
Tattoo Experience, Ancona, Italy



Kouhû Irezumi, Japan



Elaine Davidson on a visit from Scotland with Sho from Singapore and husband



Winner 3rd place Best Colour



Da Cosa Nasce Cosa, Piacenza



Various artists



The Mother's Worries
was the first musical act of
the convention



1st prize Best in Show Saturday, Dani Martos, Seu D'Urgell, Demon Tattoo, Spain



Winner 3rd place Best Tribal

Pierluigi Deliperi Crew Production, Sassari, Italy



Exhibition on tattoos among indigenous tribes



Laura Fiorini
Tattooing With Love, Italy



Winner 1st place Best Colour

Noi Siamese 1969 Tattoo, Oslo, Norway



Colin Dale Skin & Bones, Copenhagen, Denmark



Winner 1st place Best in Show Saturday

Dani Martos Seu D'Urgell, Demon Tattoo, Spain



Italian actor, Giuliano

seems almost obvious that he would be the one to pass the torch.

"I'm originally from Canada, but I've lived in Denmark for 20 years now. My grandparents are Swedish and I was raised with Inuit kids. My parents were foster parents to some kids and some of them stayed on so my parents were very conscious about culture. Also my mother is a seamstress, so she's very happy I'm doing this, although she could probably do it better."

The Canadian Dane is also one of the artists who attracted the biggest crowd while working at the convention, especially when he tattooed Lars Krutak; and he's happy with his first visit to Florence.

"It's been really nice and the organisers are really interested in cultural tattooing. You don't always find that at conventions. It's often more of the fine techniques. Also there's a lot of artwork here and it's set up really nice as a part of the convention and not in a separate room. It's very user friendly," he says, and smiles.

The artwork could be considered the secondary focus of the show, besides all the non-traditional tattooists of course.

"We thought that, since many tattoo artists are artists in general, we should do some shows," said Silvia Bongianini. "We have, for instance, one exhibition called 'Sante Peccatrici', where 31 female tattooists were asked to do an interpretation of a female saint. And one called 'Skin's Friends', where tattoo artists have painted ectoplasmic toys and the proceeds are donated to charity."

Alongside all of this there are bands playing, acrobats performing, giant



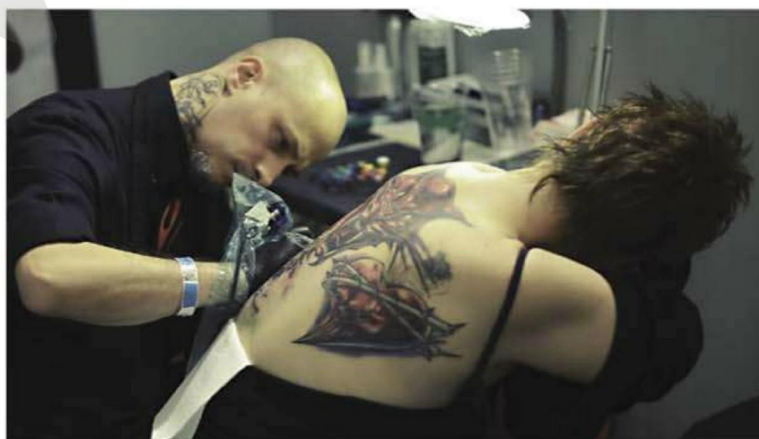
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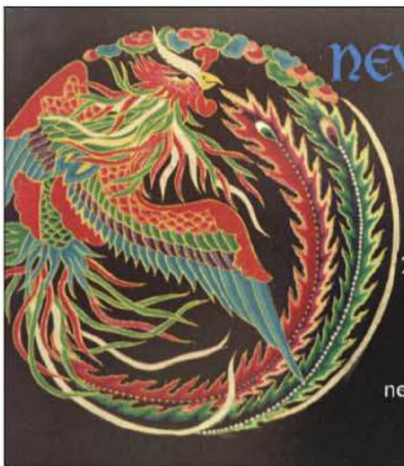
fauns wandering around blowing horns. But the one performer who has convention-goers crowding round is Elaine Davidson. With her 8,000 piercings, she's a Guinness World Record holder doing her first two performances at a convention ever.

As she lets large spikes, a sword and pair of scissors pierce her tongue to the music of Survivor's 'Eye of the Tiger' among other power hits, I see a child walk away while her slightly older sister remains by the side of the stage through the entire show, with a somewhat puzzled, disgusted and yet curiously interested look on her face. A look that sums up this whole performance and one mirrored earlier in the day when onlookers watched a Canadian-born Dane torture an American TV show host on a quest to understand the underlying layers of superficial traditions.

THE ART OF FLORENCE (2)

Despite Latin being the main language of the courts and the Church, writers such as Dante Alighieri used their own language, the Florentine dialect, in composing their works. Dante's masterpiece is the Divine Comedy, which mainly deals with the poet himself taking an allegoric and moral tour of Hell, Purgatory and finally Heaven, during which he meets numerous mythological and real characters of his age and before.





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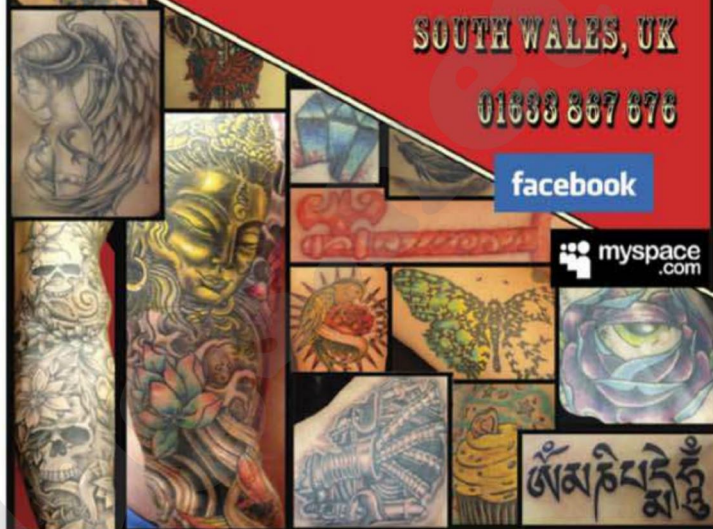
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NEW BEGINNINGS

Whenever I'm asked which of my tattoos is my favourite, I always say, "the newest one"; and it's true, whichever is the most recent feels the shiniest. I think my attitude is a healthy one, the opposite of nostalgia



Paula Hardy-Kangelos

Rather than wearing rose tinted spectacles for the past, I'm celebrating the present. Of course, ultimately I'm celebrating the future too, as I know that today's favourite will be superseded by the next new one, my collection is always moving forward always looking for the new.

New Year is often inspiration for fantasies and ambitions of newness – new lifestyles, new hobbies, and new careers. I imagine that many Skin Deep readers are aiming to make 2012 the year that they begin their own tattoo career journey by starting to study art or finally securing that elusive apprenticeship.

Most tattoo enthusiasts must have considered learning how to make their very own tattoo art, even if only fleetingly. After all, most of us are not cut out for such a career move as even those blessed with outstanding artistic ability don't often possess the rest of the wide-ranging skill set required; so if you can't draw, forget it. However, if you are one of the few who can paint with as much ferocity and single mindedness as you have love for tattooing, if you know about the hard work, the long hours, the back ache and repetitive strain injury, the difficult customers, the financial uncertainty of self employment and the immense responsibility required when marking someone for life AND still want to make 2012 the year you finally begin an apprenticeship, I wish you much luck as you walk a difficult path towards your future and I look forward to enjoying the artistic

output of the next generation of tattoo artists.

Others approaching a new year knowing their ongoing journey may be an uncomfortable one, are the many tattoo enthusiasts who have used their ink to punctuate periods of difficulty in their personal lives. That is, those that have become tattooed to commemorate or celebrate, to 'reclaim' their bodies for themselves or to dedicate them to others, to bid farewell to their old selves and to welcome their new lives. Those that are brightly coloured phoenix's rising

I LIKE TO THINK THAT IN THE FUTURE I'LL BE A BLURRY OLD LADY, COVERED IN FUZZY BLUE TATTOOS LIKE THE ONES MY GRANDPA AND GREAT UNCLE SPORTED

from ashes, flying into new worlds.

Our tattoos change our bodies in obvious ways, but they also change our minds in ways that are far less easy to quantify, ways that empower us forwards into new beginnings. If anyone reading this is contemplating their own new start, again, I wish them much luck and love on their journey and assure them that their tattoos are totems and talismans and with them they will never be totally alone.

Other, less fundamental yet still important newness will be found in the very art that brings us all together. Like all visual forms, tattooing features observable trends and movements, travelling far from early primitive marks, through naive figures and on to the realist, hyper-realist and super stylised images

we see today. In the last few years, the two extremes of realistic colour images and pared down black line work have become increasingly popular; incredibly different ways of constructing images, both seemingly unthinkable a decade or so ago.

Tattooing acknowledges its own history but is not static. Instead it looks backwards and forwards simultaneously. The best tattoo artists constantly ask themselves how to make a tattoo brighter, bolder, and more solid, how to give it more longevity and how to push

the imagery as far as they can without compromising the integrity of the technical application.

I've been collecting tattoos for over 15 years and have seen a kind of ebb and flow of subject matters, trends that have cycled and traditional images that have been resurrected, even almost forgotten machine types and techniques have enjoyed a renaissance. But one aspect has constantly moved forwards, the solidity of application, through which the quality of contemporary tattooing continues to climb.

I like to think that in the future I'll be a blurry old lady, covered in fuzzy blue tattoos like the ones my grandpa and great uncle sported, but that future seems increasingly unlikely. This year, I'm incredibly excited to add to my collection, to fall in love with new imagery, new styles, and new artists, and to find ways to integrate them with the tattoos of my past... 



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